HOW TO HAVE A BETTER LIFE

TOOLS FROM A MASTER LIFE COACH

BY BROOKE CASTILLO

LEARN HOW TO MANAGE YOUR MIND, EMOTIONS, ACTIONS, AND RESULTS
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**Introduction**

Are you generally happy with your life, but sometimes feel stuck or unmotivated? Maybe you’re looking for inspiration or encouragement in some areas. Or maybe you’re already highly motivated but are looking for some proven methods or tools to bring you to that next level. If you’re familiar with my work at The Life Coach School, then you know about the many benefits of life coaching—but did you know that you can coach yourself? It’s true. Furthermore, the benefits of coaching yourself can sometimes outweigh those of hiring a life coach.

What are some of those benefits? A big one is that your coach is always with you. You never have to wait for an appointment or work around your coach’s schedule, and you can work at whatever pace you want. You also get to know your client (yourself) well, which has many advantages in addition to making you an effective coach. Another benefit is that you get to enjoy your successes as both client and coach. Finally, if you’re the type who likes to help others, you can use what you’ve learned to help friends, family members, and coworkers who come to you looking for advice.

If this all sounds good to you, you’re probably wondering how it’s possible to self coach. First of all, I can assure you that it’s possible. I’ve been coaching clients for over a decade now. It has become my life’s work. One of my goals as a life coach is to teach my clients how to coach themselves. When they reach that point, I know that I’ve done my job. I’ve witnessed it thousands of times. So not only do I know it’s possible, but I’m also intimately familiar with methods and tools that work to teach self coaching. Because I’m so happy to see people cross that bridge over to self coaching, I’ve developed an exclusive program that teaches people how to coach themselves. It’s called Self Coaching Scholars. This book is a taste of that program.
In these pages, I start out with the most common obstacles that people face, based on what I’ve witnessed over the years. Perhaps you’ll be able to relate to one or more of them. You’ll get to read about how I help my clients deal with these obstacles, and in doing so you will hopefully understand more about how life coaching works. Part One covers fear and anxiety—obstacles that are usually easy to recognize in oneself. Part Two covers the victim mentality and self doubt, which are sometimes more difficult to uncover. The third part of the book is about healthy thought processes and emotional maturity, and how life coaching can help to identify where you’re at and help you get to where you want to be. The fourth and final part covers the self coaching techniques we use at The Life Coach School: How to Solve Any Problem and the Self Coaching Model. This last part is exciting because this is where you’ll learn how to put everything together and begin to understand how to be your own life coach.

With this book, I pour out my heart and my mind—and some of the most important things I’ve learned during my years as a coach—for you. You’ll understand the inner workings of what a life coach does, and like those in my Self Coaching Scholars program, you’ll learn about some of the ways we help our clients to become unstuck, to grow, and to thrive in life. My hope is that this will give you a good taste of what self coaching can offer, meanwhile getting you started on reaching that next level, whether that’s in your personal or professional life or both. So go ahead and turn the page, and we’ll get started right now.
PART ONE

What Holds Us Back: Common Obstacles to Success and How to Overcome Them
Fear and failure—they have so much in common. Do you know someone who says that failure is their greatest fear? Maybe that’s you. This self-defeating mindset is unfortunately quite prevalent. Lots of people say to me, “I have a real fear of failure.” Even seemingly confident people experience it. Fortunately, life coaches know how to teach people to overcome both fear and failure, and even use both to their advantage. My coaching students and I train our clients to do it all the time. In doing so, we’ve come to see that our strategies work. With practice and observation, the ability to use failure and fear to one’s advantage becomes second nature.

Regarding failure, there’s a lot of talk out there about how not to fail and how to succeed. I think there needs to be more talk about failure and how to do it properly. That’s where I start with my clients. So that’s what I’ll explain in the first part of this chapter. See if you can imagine yourself as both coach and client as we take a good look at what failure is and why it’s so scary. I’ll show you how feelings (not facts) contribute to the fear of failure. You’ll also learn how to experience failure in a positive way, and why this is good for you. Then we’ll move on to fear in general, because once you understand how inconvenient and detrimental the fear of failure can be, you can apply that to fear in other areas. Fear is a part of our lives. It can be a healthy part. But it’s often irrational. Do you know how to recognize the difference? If not, I’ll show you. I’ll also show you that it can be good to acknowledge fear. Sometimes, taking action in spite of your acknowledged fear is one of the most powerful things that
you can do. In this chapter, you’ll learn about some of the particular ways that life coaches help clients do that. Perhaps you’ll be able to apply what you’ve learned right away and experience your first successful endeavor with self coaching.

WHAT IS FAILURE?

Let’s look at failure. More specifically, let’s look at how to fail. I’d say that most people don’t achieve their dreams because they don’t want to fail. But they don’t ask themselves why they don’t want to fail. So when they say they have a real fear of failure, I ask them, “What does that mean? What are you afraid of? What is a failure to you? Why are you afraid of it?” They respond, “You know what? I’ve never really thought about it that way.”

As life coaches, we try to get to the root of all the issues. We don’t try to solve just the problems. We try to solve the causes of the problems. So as a coach, you’ll need to ask a lot of questions. I’ve found that one of the reasons people have problems is because they don’t understand what the problems are. When it comes to fear of failure, the first thing to do is to understand what failure is. Ask Google (you know, the authority on everything) and it tells you that failure is “The omission of expected or required action.” The omission of expected or required action: I love this definition of failure. But it doesn’t quite encapsulate what we experience.

WHY FEAR OF FAILURE IS A PROBLEM

To explain failure as just not doing our expected action, or as someone else not doing our expected action, seems so benign. “There was an omission of action on either my part or your part.” That’s what we call failure? Well, that’s not a big deal, right? It’s just something that didn’t turn out the way we had expected.

Or is it more than that?

I’ve found that what most people do is stop expecting, so they never have a chance to fail. They keep their expectations low. They just keep recycling the same life. They never go outside their comfort zone, and then they never have to deal with not meeting an expectation. I think that’s such a shame.

So many of the clients that I talk to don’t feel alive anymore because they’re not putting themselves out there. They’re not putting themselves out there because they’re afraid, and they don’t want to fail. Fear of failure seems safe and harmless, but it keeps us from thriving—from living how we’re meant to live. And that’s no way to live.
THE ROOT CAUSE OF FEAR OF FAILURE: UNWANTED FEELINGS

If you have a fear of failure, a life coach can help you understand why you’re afraid of failure by asking questions that you might not have considered. I work with clients all the time in an attempt to understand these primary questions: “Why are you avoiding failing?” and “What is the reason you’re avoiding failing?” It always boils down to avoiding a feeling. If failure means not meeting your expectation or not taking the required action to meet your expectation, then what’s going to happen is that you’re going to think some thought that’s going to create a negative emotion. The real reason why we’re avoiding “missing the mark” or “not meeting our expectation” is because we don’t want to feel what we’re going to feel when that happens.

Here’s what’s interesting about that: When you don’t meet your expectation, the only feeling you’re going to end up having is based on what you decide to think. You set out to do something, you have an expectation of the result, and you miss that expectation.

At that point, you get to decide what you’re going to make that mean. You get to decide what you’re going to think about that. If you think about that in a way that hurts your feelings—if you think about that in a way that’s disappointing—then you’re going to experience that negative emotion.

Ironically, the whole reason you’re avoiding failing is that you’re avoiding something that you have complete control over. That something is your reaction to failing.

Stay with me here because this is important: You’re avoiding something you are in charge of and acting like it’s happening to you. Most people tell me that failure happens to them, and then they have to experience it, but that’s not the truth. What happens is we miss our expectation, and then we decide to make it mean something that hurts. We decide to make it mean something that causes us a negative emotion.

I have spent two years in the hospital and was told I would never walk again. My expectation is to walk again, but I might fail. I need to be willing to fail. I am getting stronger, and little victories along the way are encouraging. I can stand. - ANNE
HOW WE EXPERIENCE FAILURE IS OUR CHOICE: AN EXAMPLE

When we don’t meet our expectations, we can decide to make that mean the end of the world, or we can decide to make that mean something positive. In making it positive, we won’t be dreading experiencing that very thing that we create for ourselves, which is the negative emotion. I know that this sounds interesting in theory, but in case it’s not clear, I’m giving you an example.

Let’s say I set up a class, and I start marketing it. I want to have ten people attend. I’m excited about the class, but only six people sign up. Then I start a negative dialogue: “What a fail! Only six people signed up. I shouldn’t even teach this class. People don’t want what I have to offer. I’m not good at this, and I’m never going to do this again. This feels so terrible!”

The reason it feels terrible is that I’m making it mean that there’s something wrong with me—that I’m not any good at this. The “fail” is only awful because I’m making it awful. And so I start avoiding something that I’m the cause of, without realizing that I am.

Alternatively, I could set up a class and say, “I want to have ten people in the class.” But if six people show up, I could be like, “Hey! Awesome! Six people want what I have to offer.” I didn’t meet my expectation. I didn’t get the ten people I had wanted. However, I got six, and I can move forward from there.

WANT TO GET BETTER AT FAILURE? PRACTICE!

If you go back to the definition, failure is the omission of expected or required action. I love thinking about it that way. I say to myself, “I merely didn’t do something. The reason that only six people signed up for my class was simply because of an omission of action on my part. I can do it differently next time.”

When I think about it that way, the failure experience doesn’t feel so bad. It makes me want to learn and grow and try it again. Can you see that I’m the one that’s determining how failure will affect me? I’m deciding what to think when I don’t meet my expectation.

Success is one of those things that’s acquired by failure and by being willing to fail. There’s a wonderful quote that goes, “If you want success, you need to double your rate of failure.” I believe in that because I think that the better you get at failing, the more willing you’re going to be to do it, the more you’re going to learn, and the better you’re going to get at meeting your expectations. I believe this, and I’ve seen it happen in myself and my clients.
REFUSE TO BEAT YOURSELF UP

If failure is not meeting your expectations, then success is meeting your expectations. The best way to meet them is to practice, and in doing so, to make a lot of mistakes and learn what doesn’t work. So, when you focus on why you didn’t meet your expectations, and when you think about taking action in that way, then you’re not dwelling on the fact that you failed. Instead, you’re focused on what you need to do to succeed.

Sometimes people say to me that they’re perfectionists. They’ll say, “I just want to do it all right, and I’m not willing to do it if I can’t do it perfectly.” I have a sense about perfectionism. I think perfectionism is for scared people because it gives them an excuse to not take action, to not put themselves out there, and to not meet their expectation. Why the excuse? They know that they’re going to beat themselves up if they fail to meet their expectation.

If, instead of requiring perfection, you were to make a deal with yourself and say, “Hey, I’m going to go out there and just try and do this, even though I might not do it perfectly,” there’s a definite chance that you’re not going to meet your expectation. You’re going to fail, and it might happen many times, but here’s the thing—when you fail this time, you’re going to have your own back. You’re going to treat yourself with respect, and you’re going to honor yourself. You’re going to use it as an opportunity to learn and to take care of yourself. You’re going to use it as an opportunity to love yourself more instead of loving yourself less. You’ll refuse to say mean things to yourself, to beat yourself up, or to quit when you don’t meet your expectation.

If you set yourself up this way ahead of time, before you start any action, you’re going to be much more willing to take action. Not only will you be more willing to take action, but you’ll be more willing to take the risk that most success requires. To put yourself outside of your comfort zone and to try something you haven’t done is pretty risky. What are you risking? Failure. You could fail, but if you know that you’re going to take care of yourself if you fail, you’re going to be much more willing to do it. If you’re much more willing to fail, you’re going to double your rate of failure—maybe triple it. And in doing so, you’re going to have a much higher chance of ultimately achieving success.
WHY FAILURE IS GOOD

A Timeless Example

Let’s look at the benefits of failing. Although it’s a bit overused, I love the example of little children learning how to walk because they endure some epic fails. It is not pretty. The poor things bite the dust multiple times before they get across a room. What’s fascinating, and what I love about it, is the mechanics. One of the reasons that they’re not walking well is because they don’t have the strength. They have to push themselves back up, and that pushing themselves back up is what gives them the strength to eventually be able to walk. If they stopped trying to walk because they were failing, then they would never have the opportunity to get strong enough to be able to walk. It’s through the failing, through the falling down, that they get strong enough to do it. I just think that’s brilliant.

INSIGHTS FROM MY SELF COACHING SCHOLARS CLASS

Once, in a Self Coaching Scholars class, we were talking about this idea of confidence, about how we defined confidence, and about where confidence originates. I explained that one way I view it is as a willingness to fail in front of other people. We talked about how most people want to get their confidence from their past. They want to say, “I’ll be confident at something after I’m competent at it.” We considered the pouring of a glass of water and how we feel very confident when we’re pouring a glass of water because we’ve done it so many times. We know that we’re very good at it. If we spill or we miss the glass or knock it over, we don’t consider that a failure. We don’t make it mean anything negative, and so we’re willing to do it because it’s not a big deal if we fail. We know we’re not going to quit and never try to do it again.

How is it possible to feel that same sense of confidence with something that you’ve never done? In the class, we determined that you have to find confidence in your future. But how do you find confidence from your future when you’re starting out or doing something you’ve never done before? You find confidence by recognizing that you risk failure with everything that you’re going to be doing. Your confidence has to come from your ability to fail, from knowing that you’re not going to give up, and from knowing that you can fail and get better—and get better every time.

I like to try new things. I like change. I like putting myself out there on that leading edge of my comfort zone. I’ve discovered that I like these things because I’m very willing to fail, and I’m willing to fail in front of other people. Failure isn’t just something you talk about after getting a low score on a math test. You have to consider failure as something you want to include in your life. It’s not something to avoid. It should be pursued and perfected.
One of my students brought up this idea of believing in our capacity to learn, and instead of using the word “failure,” using the word “learning.” As Thomas Edison said, “I have not failed ten thousand times. I have not failed once. I have succeeded in proving that those ten thousand ways will not work.” That’s exactly how we can look at our failures. They’re opportunities for learning. We didn’t take the type of action that was necessary for the results we wanted, so we just need to adjust that and change it until we meet our expectation. Think about failure in a way that’s positive. Think about it as something to move toward, instead of as something to move away from.

I like the idea of failure as being a skill that we develop. If we’re good at falling down, we learn how to fall down well, and it’s not so scary anymore. I was so excited when I was talking to my class about this. All of us got into it because the idea that failure can be something that we embrace is exciting. It got us thinking about the future instead of avoiding it so much. “You get good at failure by doing it often.” It’s a good sign if that thought tickled your mind as much as it did ours. It’s where I try to get my clients. When they reach that point, we then get to work at how they’ll weave the practice of failure into their lives.

HOW TO EMBRACE AND PRACTICE FAILURE
Making Failure a Goal

Ramit Sethi is one of my favorite mentors. He has a website called, “I Will Teach You to Be Rich.” I’m definitely not in his target market, but I love him. He’s hilarious and kind of defiant and rebellious. One of the things he talks about that was a game changer for me is that he has a file on his computer that he wants to add five failures to each month. If he’s not failing epically five times per month, he’s not working hard enough.

So I started doing it too. What it did for me was amazing. When I failed or did something that didn’t work, I didn’t do a big disappointment-regret-shame dance. Instead, I said to myself, “Oh, failure number one. I can put that in my file now.” It changed my whole perspective. I thought, “One fail down, four to go!” Ever since then, I’ve been accumulating fails like badges of honor. They make me stronger. I’m getting so much better at failing, and I have much more confidence when I try new things.

As I explained, we choose how to feel about failure because we decide what to make it mean. I know that I’m not going to make it mean anything negative now. I’m going to make it mean, “Hey! A six out of ten.” I choose excitement, anticipation, and momentum toward the future because of the willingness that I now have to fail.
CHOOSE THE RIGHT KIND OF FAILURE

I want to be clear about one thing when it comes to failure: It’s important to separate failure from your comfort zone and to do it by taking risks. I want you to understand the importance of experiencing failure that occurs from taking risks rather than experiencing failure by just not showing up. What I mean by taking risks isn’t the same thing as taking chances that are dangerous to your physical health. I just mean opening yourself up to rejection.

For example, you could try volunteering somewhere totally new, take woodcarving lessons, or take some type of class in a subject that doesn’t come easily to you. You could totally screw up. But more likely, you’ll make some mistakes because you’re out of your comfort zone, and you’ll learn from them.

You could also just try talking to someone new at the grocery store, at a coffee shop, or at your child’s soccer game. You’re putting yourself out there, and you’re introducing yourself to someone. They could reject you. You could consider that a failure. Those sorts of things are outside of your comfort zone. You’re putting yourself out there, and you’re trying something new. You are the toddler learning how to walk.

These are the types of failure that I encourage my students to try. They’re the type we practice in the Self Coaching Scholars program. They’re active types of failure—not passive types, which are failures due to inaction. This is what we’ll look at next.

DON’T SABOTAGE YOUR EFFORTS

Failure that comes from just not showing up—from inaction—comes from setting yourself up for sabotage. That’s something I don’t want to encourage you to do. Here’s what I mean by that: Let’s take the example of the ten-person class. You put yourself out there initially. You offer a class and hope that ten people sign up. But only six people sign up, and then you lose your enthusiasm. You’re late to the class. You don’t prepare for it. You do a terrible job delivering it. You don’t exude excitement. You don’t bother to share anything valuable. You’re just kind of like, “Blah...” You’re just not there.

That kind of failure—that kind of sabotage—is not something you want to do. It’s a failure because you omitted the required action—action that is well within your comfort zone to do. You just didn’t show up for yourself, and you didn’t show up for your students. You have negative thinking driving performance that further proves you’ve “failed.” You’ve sabotaged your effort to teach the class.
How can you avoid sabotage? Usually, the thoughts that drive it are: “There’s something wrong with me. I’m not worth it. This isn’t worth it. Nobody’s going to like me. Why should I even show up?” I teach my students that when you find yourself in that cycle, you need to take a look at your mind and find out what’s going on. It’s another invitation to tap into the work that you need to do ahead of time because it’s not something you want to repeat.

People will often say, “The first time you make a mistake, it’s no big deal. You learn from it, but don’t make the exact same mistake again.” That’s the same thing I would say about failure. If you do something and you don’t meet your expectation, and then try it again the exact same way and get the exact same result, I would consider that as an example of “staying within your comfort zone” failure, failure by inaction, or self sabotage. That’s a different thing from the type of failure that will help you, so don’t repeat it. Failure, the way you want to do it, is putting yourself out there into the unknown by doing something new. Do that, and you won’t regret it because you’ll gain useful experience and information from it.

A NOTE ABOUT CONFUSION

Occasionally, I point out something I see in my clients that causes them to say, “Oh my gosh, I had no idea I was doing this!” Often, that “something” has to do with confusion. One of the ways we avoid failure is by being confused. We say we’re confused because we don’t understand how to do something. We say, “I don’t know.” This is a sneaky method of avoidance. Again, we’re afraid of not meeting expectations, and this is fear holding us back. So be careful. If you notice yourself not taking action, and you’re telling yourself the reason you’re not doing it is that you’re undecided, you don’t know, or you’re confused, just know that that’s the easiest way to fail ahead of time. So try to understand your motivations for inaction. Pay attention. Have a look at that because when you avoid failure, you’re avoiding success. Being confused, saying “I don’t know,” and being undecided is just a way of hiding. Be real about it.

Regarding confusion, I never say to myself that I don’t know how to do something. It doesn’t serve me to say that. What I say is, “I’m figuring out how to do something.” “I’m going to find out how to do something,” or “I’m learning the steps to understand this.” Saying it in that way doesn’t paralyze me. It keeps me going. I don’t say, “I don’t know,” I say, “I’m figuring it out.” I don’t say, “I’m undecided,” I say, “I’m going to decide.” There’s no right decision, so when I make a decision, I’m willing for it to be the wrong decision. I’m willing to fail. Failure brings success. It’s brought success to me, and it’s brought success to my clients. It works.
FINISH THOUGHTS ABOUT FAILURE

We’ve looked at the definition of failure. We’ve looked at our thinking, and how it creates a fear of failure. And I’ve shown you how I help clients get to the root cause of their fear of failure. I’ve shown you how I help them understand how and why it’s good to embrace and practice failure, and mentioned some tips to avoid the wrong kind of failure. I hope that you’ve changed how you think about failure (if you viewed it in a negative light), that you understand how it leads to success, and that you can see how coaching can help you with this problem. I’m always thrilled when my clients, and the students in my Self Coaching Scholars program, experience some epic fails. Then I know that they’ve learned something really important and are that much closer to success.

This brief look at the fear of failure was an invitation to embrace discomfort and stop self sabotage. Let’s now go deeper and examine fear itself. I’ll also give you some exercises you can use to self coach—to identify your fears and conquer them.

FEAR

I have explained that fear of unwanted feelings is often a factor in fear of failure, but I didn’t dig into the psychology of fear in general. That’s what we’ll do now. We’ll get into the cause of fear itself. You’ll learn how to identify if a fear is valid, or if it’s invalid and just holding you back. At the end of the chapter, I’ll give you some easy action items that my clients and I use to effectively recognize and banish our false fears—the kinds of fear that bring us down.

FEAR AS THE RESULT OF A MISMANAGED MIND

The ability to understand the psychology of fear is important to everyone because everyone experiences fear. Some people understand fear better than others. These people don’t use it as a reason to not become fully who they are. It’s so reassuring to me to look at a person who’s created the life they want—to know that they’re a human being too, so they also feel fear.

Discussions about fear, and how to overcome it, are fascinating to me because most of us don’t talk about it. And when we do, we talk about it as if it’s just a given. We say, “I’m just too afraid to do that,” as if it’s a valid reason not to do something. What I want to offer is that fear is not a valid reason for not doing something; it’s not a valid reason for not taking action. In fact, fear is just a symptom of a mismanaged mind. That’s all it is. It just reflects that you’re not managing your mind properly.
FEAR USUALLY COMES FROM THOUGHTS

Remember how the fear of failure is often caused by a fear of experiencing an unwanted emotion? When we think a thought, that causes an emotion to occur. The fear that we feel comes from thoughts we have in our minds. Most of those fearful thoughts are irrational. Pay attention now: What are your deepest fears? Can you identify the thoughts causing that emotion?

There is an exception, which is when the fight-or-flight response gets engaged. That’s what happens when the thalamus processes a stimulus by inputting into the amygdala before inputting into the prefrontal cortex. So the amygdala gets a second or two head-start over the more sensible reasoning process of the prefrontal cortex. An example of this might be when you’re walking down your hallway, and it’s dark, and your thirteen-year-old son jumps out of his doorway into your face and screams. He’s wearing a unicorn mask with bloodshot eyes, and you jump twenty feet in the air. Your brain doesn’t have time to process that; it just goes straight to, “Run! Get the heck out of here!” That’s something we’ve evolved to do. It’s good for us to be able to react and have that adrenaline pump through us so we can get the heck out of there. That unicorn could’ve been a tiger back in the day. It helps us protect ourselves.

However, in the case of the unicorn mask, it’s completely unnecessary to jump twenty feet in the air. But your brain doesn’t know that. So there are times when there’s a stimulus that will completely bypass the thinking part of the brain. I’m not going to be addressing fight-or-flight reactions because that’s not the majority of the fear that we experience. That’s not to say that we don’t create similar, unreasonable reactions in our bodies. By thinking fearful thoughts, we create stimuli—and ensuing responses—in our bodies that cause all sorts of fear.

FEAR’S LITTLE-KNOWN SECRET

Now you know one of the best secrets of the universe: We create our fear. In our day and age, fear is unnecessary in about ninety percent of situations. Fear isn’t something we need in our day-to-day lives. It’s something that’s part of our evolution. But we can experience it in a whole new way. I think that’s our next stage. It’s one of those things we have to learn to live with because it’s part of us. But we also have to learn that it’s no big deal, that we’re going to be OK, and that we can keep taking action even though we’re experiencing it. Because there’s nothing to be afraid of. Fear is harmless.

When we’re watching a scary movie, we don’t have to run out of the theater screaming. We can experience the scary movie. We can sit there and know it’s not real. I have to do this. I don’t like scary movies, but when I’m viewing them I have to tell myself things like, “These are just actors,”
“That’s just ketchup,” or “This is just pretend.” You can use that same exact skill in your life. You’re not going to die. It’s going to be OK. You can send this email to this person, for example, and everything is going to be fine. Nothing horrible and gruesome is going to happen. You just have to remind yourself that this is only the perception of danger. It isn’t valid. It isn’t useful fear that’s going to save your life.

FEAR SHOULD SERVE YOU

I’m going to explain what you can do about mismanaged fear, but first I want to look a little more carefully at the difference between fear that serves us and fear that doesn’t. One of the things that’s truly great about fear is that it gets us moving quickly. We get that shot of adrenaline and our muscles tense up. We become more alert, and we have that stimulating energy that can get us the heck out of danger. That’s a good thing—unless we’re sitting in a suburban kitchen thinking about what someone might say to us at a party, and we’re having that same reaction. Or, we’re thinking about a situation at work, and we’re having that same reaction over and over and over again. That’s where fear, or creating fear with our minds, does not serve us.

Some say we should honor our fear, even coddle it. I’m not for coddling fear, but I’m all for feeling fear because I think it’s one of those emotions that, unfortunately, most of us don’t feel. I’m going to explain this later, but I don’t think fear is a reason or a valid excuse for not doing our work in the world. When I ask students of mine why they aren’t taking action, they often tell me, “I’m afraid of failure,” or “I’m afraid of success.” Look, it’s fine. It’s fine to be afraid of success. It’s fine to be afraid of failure. But you’re going to need to do it anyway. The bestselling author and public speaker Susan Jeffers, Ph.D. (psychology), believed in this concept so strongly that she wrote a book about it, entitled Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway.

I think this is one of those concepts that you have to wrap your mind around: Fear doesn’t mean that something has gone wrong. Fear means that you’re a human being and you’re wired for survival. Up until very recent times, humanity needed fear to run away from things that were going to eat us. Still today, fear serves us in so many ways. It keeps us from jumping off of the top of cliffs; it keeps us from running into traffic; it keeps us from driving 150 miles per hour on the freeway. I have a fear of skydiving: I’ve done it once, and I don’t want to do it again.

On the other hand, I also have a fear of not knowing what to say when I meet new people. I’m an introvert when I meet new people in an environment that’s uncertain to me. I have a fear of that, and I’ve let that hold me back in my life. That’s one of those fears that is completely irrational. What’s the worst thing that can happen when I introduce myself to someone? The worst thing
Up until a few months ago, I had no idea how fear was present in my life with such intensity. I’m still working on it, and it is less intense. I’m putting your material into practice and can’t wait to have a better understanding.

– NATALIE

that could happen is they could say, “I don’t want to talk to you.” Why is that scary? Because of what I make it mean? Well, that’s on me. People have the right to do whatever they want. When I think about that fear, I can claim it as one to work on. When I say it’s a fear, what I really mean is it’s a thought that I’m entertaining. I’m not deliberately entertaining it, but I’m letting it come into my mind and entertain itself. I’m not deliberately creating something to oppose it. How can I work on those thoughts—on that fear? That’s up next.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT OUR FEARS?

First and foremost, simply accepting that fear is going to be a part of your life and that irrational fear is going to be a part of your life will help you move forward. Fear doesn’t mean “stop.” I can’t say that enough. You don’t have to be fearless before you take action. In fact, sometimes taking action while you’re acknowledging your fear is one of the most powerful things you can do.

This is what I want you to do with that fear: I want you to understand it enough so you can find its cause. Figure out the thought patterns that are causing it and then change them. If you’re not able to change them immediately because they’re deeply patterned thoughts, I want you to take action anyway.

Why take action? There are two reasons why you can and should take action while you’re still feeling fear (and knowing that it’s an illogical, irrational fear):

1. To prove that this particular feeling of fear is irrational
2. To know what fear feels like (as opposed to the feeling of resisting fear)
First Reason to Take Action: Prove That the Feeling of Fear Is Irrational

When you take action and you put yourself out there, all the things that you’re afraid of—all those irrational fears—get proven wrong. You’re able to go out there, take action, and see that you’re not going to be killed by a tiger. You’re going to be fine.

Look at the psychology of fear and how it’s treated: One of the ways that people who have severe phobias (which is full-on irrational fear) are treated is through exposure therapy. If someone has an irrational fear of, say, spiders or snakes, they’re often treated by being exposed to the spiders or snakes in a safe environment. This allows them to make a new and less fearful association with the creatures.

We can do the very same thing. We can expose ourselves to our irrational fears and learn that they’re not scary. When you think about the things many of us are afraid of, they’re very irrational. Take public speaking, for example. We’re terrified of having someone see us in a certain way. But when you think that through, what’s the worst thing that could happen? You get up there on the stage and even if everybody is laughing at you, if you think about it, you’re not in harm’s way. You’re not going to die from it. Yet some people are more afraid of public speaking than they are of dying. There’s this illogical crisscross that has happened.

Think about all the things that you’re afraid of, whether it comes to your business, your personal life, meeting new people, or trying something new. What you’re really afraid of typically has nothing to do with life or death. It has nothing to do with whether you’re going to survive or not. The main things that we’re afraid of are our creations—our own feelings. When we think about public speaking, and we think about making a mistake and everybody laughing at us, what we’re actually terrified of in that situation is the feeling of humiliation. This is, again, a feeling we would create by what we would make it mean if everyone was laughing at us. We don’t think this through. We just stop at fear.

Taking action while you’re still feeling fear is a skill that you can develop. Maybe you’re still going with your knee-jerk reaction: When there’s fear, you either run or you stop (which, again, are very useful actions when there is a real danger). When there’s not real danger—when you can think about the worst that can happen and about whether your fear is valid—once you get to that point, then you can take action and feel the fear along the way.

In my life, being able to take action while I’m still feeling a little bit of fear—while I’m still feeling a little bit of nervousness and knowing that it’s just caused by a thought in my mind—has allowed me to be much more successful than I would otherwise have been. I’m able to move past my fears
because, over time and through doing things in spite of feeling fear, I’ve proven to myself that it’s irrational and that there’s nothing to be afraid of. This is also the experience of my students and clients, and so this reason to take action in spite of fear is solidly anchored in my mind.

Second Reason to Take Action: To Know What Fear Feels Like

An important thing to know about fear is that most of us don’t feel it. When I ask my clients, “Tell me what fear feels like,” what they typically describe to me is the resistance to fear. They know that when fear comes up, they either avoid it or push it away. What happens is that when any vibration comes up in your body that is fear, you experience a fear of feeling fear.

A few physical, measurable reactions to fear include an increased heart rate and a tensing of the muscles. Some people experience a tingling sensation on the skin. When I describe it like that, it doesn’t seem like a big deal, does it? Why are we freaked out about an increased heart rate and tense muscles? After all, don’t we experience the same things while at the gym? I can tell you why: It’s because most of us don’t feel the fear. We don’t say to ourselves, “I’m going to allow myself to let the fear flow through me.” Most of us, when any fear comes up, run away from it in an attempt to avoid it, which makes sense because that’s how we’re programmed. How do we run away from it? So many of my clients eat when they feel fear instead of feeling it. So many of my clients drink alcohol instead of feeling it. Many of my clients work instead of feeling it. When you learn how to embrace it, you’ll see that there’s very little to fear when it comes to fear.

Many of us have a fear not only of feeling fear but of feeling pain; we have a fear of being hurt. I watch my children experience this when they’re getting blood drawn. The fear of the pain is worse than the pain itself. But once the needle is in, it’s, “Oh, that only hurt a little bit.” The freakout beforehand was a lot worse than
The experience of having the needle go in. That’s true for most of us with most emotions and with physical pain. The fear of feeling the emotion or physical pain is sometimes so much worse than the emotion or pain itself, so we hold ourselves back from being alive, from going toward anything, because we’re afraid of how it might feel.

So, I recommend that you try to embrace the fear the next time you feel it coming on. Try just to sit and be present with yourself while you’re feeling fear, while you’re experiencing it. What does fear feel like when you allow yourself to feel it? Notice the desire to resist it, to avoid it, to put it away. It’s fascinating.

**WRITE DOWN YOUR FEARS**

One of the most important things we can do to address our fears is to take a few minutes and consider what we’re really afraid of. I highly recommend that you grab a sheet of paper and write, “What Am I Afraid Of?” at the top. Then fill that paper up. Are you afraid of running out of money? Are you afraid of becoming obese? Are you afraid of being a bag lady? Are you afraid of someone hurting you? Have a look at those fears.

When you finish, you’ll have a list of thoughts that cause fear. Look at each of them. You may have written, “I think someone’s going to hurt me,” “I think someone’s going to betray me,” or “I’m afraid of being turned down.” Try to determine if it’s a logical fear. What are you really afraid of? If you allowed yourself to experience that fear and access that thought, notice whether it’s holding you back in your life. Do you have any fears that are holding you back?

One of the things that’s great about writing down all of your fears is that it reveals your mind to you. You get a visual of what’s going on in your mind, and it’s easier to understand what thought processes need to change.

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I actually felt fear quite intensely over a thought I was having about a gathering. Instead of doing what I normally do in that situation (get overwhelmed with thoughts, cry, then tell myself how miserable I am), I followed your steps. I felt the physical emotion in my body, traced it back to the thought, and then observed the thought. I did this over and over for a few hours until I felt absolutely giddy because I realized I finally had control over my thoughts instead of them controlling me!

– TERRIN
Final Thoughts about Fear

The truth is, fear isn’t a big deal. It’s a vibration in your body caused by a thought. In fact, some of us like experiencing fear on purpose. We go on rollercoasters, and we watch scary movies. We like to watch other people be afraid, and some of us do things like jump out of bushes to scare others. We do things that cause us to experience fear.

I think one of the coolest things in the world is to overcome fear. I think that’s where all the good stuff is. I think all the good stuff in my life is on the other side of the fear that I’m creating. When I look at most of the things in my life that I want, the reason why I don’t have them is because I’m either afraid to do the work that’s required to get them, to put myself out there in a way that would make them easier to get, to talk to the right people, or to do the things that would catapult me into that space. If all I have to do is overcome those fears, then I’m going to be all set.

An Important Distinction: Uncertainty vs. Fear

If you’re thinking, “I don’t think it’s fear that’s holding me back. I think it’s something more like just not being sure what I want to do—just not understanding if this is the right decision,” I want to give you a warning: Just as with avoiding the fear of failure, false uncertainty is how many of us avoid feeling any kind of fear. We need to identify and overcome the fear in order to get the result we want. Instead of acknowledging and owning that fear, we hang out in front of it and tell ourselves that we’re confused, that we don’t know what to do, or that we can’t decide what to do. As long as we’re saying that to ourselves, we have an excuse, and we don’t move through our fear.

However, as I keep reminding you, you can’t avoid fear and get anywhere. You can’t go around it, under it, resist it, or pretend it isn’t there. You have to go through it, and you can’t go through it if you’re telling yourself you’re confused. You can’t go through it if you’re telling yourself that you don’t know what the right decision is. The reason why you don’t want to make a decision, if you think it through, is because you’re afraid you’ll make the wrong decision. The reason why you don’t know something is because you haven’t figured it out, and there’s a reason why you haven’t figured it out. Don’t let those avoidance thoughts keep you from experiencing fear. Fear is something that you want to walk toward, embrace, and explore. It will open your mind up to you. If you allow yourself to feel it, then you can ask yourself why you’re feeling it.

So go ahead: Identify your fears. Write down all the things you’re afraid of, and identify which are valid and which are irrational. Then get to work. Work through those fears. Don’t resist them. Feel them. Just like my clients, my students, and me, you’ll overcome those irrational fears and start to see the fruits of feeling fear. Remember that we’re all human, and we all create our own fear. Nobody is fearless. People who live the life they want are those who don’t use fear as a reason to stop. You can be one of those people.
A majority of the emails that I receive—and a lot of my coaching—involves anxiety. It’s something that many of us deal with on a pretty regular basis. I’ve personally dealt with it on a consistent basis for most of my life. Years ago, even as a young teen, I’d often wake up with a pit of anxiety in my stomach and go throughout the day leaving it unchecked. I did this for years. Now I occasionally wake up feeling anxious, but I process it and work through it with helpful tools that I’ve learned. I’m going to teach you about these tools. I can’t promise that anxiety won’t strike you again, but if it does, you’ll be prepared to deal with it in ways that my clients and I find to be very effective.

**ANXIETY AS A PART OF LIFE**

Anxiety is a normal part of being alive. It doesn’t need to be a problem. We just need to adapt to it. What is anxiety? The way that I describe anxiety is that it’s like a vibration or feeling—a sense of generalized worry, fear, apprehension, or nervousness that’s sometimes accompanied by physical symptoms like an increased heart rate. I often call it a “cover emotion” because it’s very vague and unspecific, and it thrives on that vagueness.

Anxiety served us well when we needed to be on alert for predators and other physical dangers when we were evolving as humans. We needed the physical benefits so we could react quickly and pay attention to what was going on. Nowadays, it’s not something that we necessarily need, but we still have the same response to perceived threats.
Knowing that anxiety is something that served us, got us this far, and queues us up for survival is helpful. A lot of times what happens when we feel anxiety is that we think, "Oh my gosh! Something is wrong with me. I shouldn’t feel this way. I’m a neurotic mess!" But ironically, the reason why you had the opportunity to evolve is actually, in part, because of anxiety. That feeling queued you up and got you here literally.

Yes, anxiety served us very well in the past. Now, living in our suburban neighborhoods, it doesn’t serve us so well. But that doesn’t mean that it’s not natural or normal to experience it. That perspective—just to know that anxiety is a part of our humanity—can be a huge relief.

**ANXIETY IS JUST A FEELING**

Anxiety in and of itself is harmless. It’s our reaction to it and our resistance to it that cause problems. I want you to think about this because it’s a game changer. Anxiety doesn’t need to be eliminated because anxiety itself is not the issue. Our reaction and resistance to anxiety are what cause the problems. Anxiety itself is just a feeling.

I often talk about how, for the purpose of instruction, it would be helpful if us life coaches could inject certain emotions into our clients. For example, I could say to you, "I’m going to inject some anxiety into you and I want you to tell me what it’s like. Just chill there and feel it."

Admittedly, that wouldn’t be true anxiety because you wouldn’t be resisting it, and you wouldn’t be reacting. You’d just be allowing it, right? You’d anticipate the experience as being just a feeling. I think you’d notice that it’s uncomfortable, though. Anxiety is not a joyride. It’s not intended to be. I think this emotion evolved to be uncomfortable in order to wake us up and get us going. That’s what it’s there for; it’s not supposed to be something that lulls us into a sense of security.

What we should remember when we feel anxiety, as modern human beings, is that it doesn’t mean we’re in danger. Anxiety has typically meant that in the past, but now it doesn’t. It’s normal. We’re adapting to it and evolving into another way of using anxiety, but we’re not there yet. We’re still feeling that fight-or-flight response while thinking about things like our kids’ grades, or about trying to please our boss, or about gaining a few pounds.

**PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY**

Think about how you need to react to physical danger. You need to fight, so you need to get all tensed up and get those fists going. Or you need to flee, which means you need to get tensed up and ready to run. Or you need to freeze, to get tensed up and not move a muscle. That’s how we typically react to danger, and that’s how we typically react to anxiety.
In our modern times, anxiety usually doesn’t mean danger. Most of us will get through our whole lives and never experience a physical threat to our lives. Yet when we feel anxiety, we’re still having that same reaction as our ancestors did. We’re still tensing ourselves up. We’re still getting ready to fight. We’re getting ready to resist. We’re getting ready to go to battle.

Ironically, the exact opposite reaction is required now. Now anxiety is just an uncomfortable emotion. What response serves you best when you’re uncomfortable? What’s the best way to deal with an uncomfortable feeling?

RESPONDING TO ANXIETY

The best way to deal with an uncomfortable feeling is to get comfortable, relax, chill, and breathe—the exact opposite of what our bodies want to do when we feel anxiety. What most of us do when we feel anxiety is to increase our tension and fall into that fight-or-flight mode. We resist, react, and, in turn, escalate our anxiety. We get tricked into doing that in a way that perpetuates it.

If we allow ourselves to have the experience of anxiety while remembering that it’s an uncomfortable emotion, and treat the discomfort by calming ourselves down, getting comfortable, breathing, and connecting, we’re in a much better position to address the trigger in a productive way. We’ll have the clarity of mind we need to help our children get better grades, to please our bosses, and to tackle those five pounds gained over the holiday. The ability to recognize and feel anxiety for what it really is, and to control our response to it is huge. Because when we start worrying about the fact that we’re feeling anxiety, it’s like putting gas on a fire. We need to go in the completely opposite direction.

OK, I can hear you saying right now, “Yes, Brooke, that’s great. That makes sense. I don’t want to tense up and increase more anxiety and increase more adrenaline and go into fight-or-
flight mode. I want to start being able to accept my anxiety, to relax into it, and allow it. BUT HOW DO I DO IT?” Don’t lose hope! I’m going to tell you. Let’s take a look at the first thing you need to do to get yourself there: You need to recognize the anxiety.

RECOGNIZE IT

The first thing you need to do is to recognize and name it. That in and of itself is very powerful because anxiety thrives on its vagueness. It thrives on that increasing tension. If, when you feel anxiety, you say, “I’m feeling vague anxiety,” or “I’m feeling survival anxiety,” and you recognize it, you separate yourself from it enough to label it and recognize that you’re on your way to overcoming it.

YOU’VE NAMED IT: NOW WHAT?

Once you recognize that you’re feeling anxious, there are four options you have: You can resist it, react to it, avoid it, or accept it. The first three responses are unproductive. They won’t get you anywhere. But you need to know what they are so that you can name them too (if you do any of them) and avoid them. I’ll discuss the first three responses, and then thoroughly explain the fourth option: how to accept anxiety. Because the key to overcoming anxiety is accepting it. I’ve found that most of us resist or fight it, so we’ll take a look at that undesirable option first.

Option One: Resistance

So many of us resist the feeling of anxiety. We push it away, fight against it, and get mad at ourselves for having it. We get tense about it. What that does, of course, is increase it.

Imagine that someone comes at you to fight you. They start a verbal disagreement with you and begin yelling at you. I want you to imagine yourself yelling back and throwing some punches. In doing so, you add yourself to the fight, doubling the energy of it.

Now if that same person came up to you yelling and screaming, but you sat in the lotus position and just smiled at them, or ignored them, you don’t add to it. You just stay calm and let their emotion simmer down.

I’m not suggesting that this is how you should react if someone yells at you. I’m just using it as an example of how you have the power to increase or decrease the tension in a situation, and how you can use this power to deal with your anxiety. If you see your anxiety as something coming at you and you want to react to it, you’re going to be in a battle with yourself.
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Option Two: Reaction

The second choice you have is to react to the anxiety. As with resistance, many of us do this. When we start feeling anxious, we react by doing all kinds of counterproductive things. Ask yourself if you do any of the following things when you’re anxious: rush around, yell at people, try to control everything, or stay up too late. We run with it, and we act it out. I’m sure you’ve seen people experience a fit of anxiety, and how they act it out. We fuel it by reacting to it. And it doesn’t help. But if you can recognize that you do this, you’re on the way to responding differently to anxiety in the future.

Option Three: Avoidance

A third option we have when anxiety strikes is avoidance. As you know, I’ve done a great deal of work with weight loss clients. Avoidance seems to be their reaction of choice. It’s almost like pretending it’s not there. When we do this, it’s like we’re saying, “Let’s ignore the fact that I’m feeling anxious right now and eat instead.” Not everyone eats to avoid anxiety, though. Some people drink alcohol to avoid it, other people work to avoid it, and other people hop on the internet and compulsively scroll through Facebook or Instagram. Unfortunately, when we deny or avoid anxiety, it starts to become an ever-looming presence in our lives.

I know, because I used to avoid it. I used to be an emotional overeater. I started to notice that whenever I let that “avoiding” guard down it was almost like anxiety attacked me. I’d be like, “Oh, dear God, what’s happening?” I’d have a vague sense that something was really wrong—that something dangerous was always under the surface—but I couldn’t remember what it was because I wasn’t paying any attention to it. I began overeating all the time. Then I told myself that the reason why I’m feeling this anxiety is that I’m overweight.

I created this whole sub-life in which I made sense of my anxiety by saying that the reason I was anxious was that I was overweight—the reason I was anxious was that I couldn’t stop eating—and I felt so out of control. I took that feeling of looming danger and gave it an explanation by creating a weight problem sub-life.

Avoiding it feels good temporarily. It feels like it’s working. It feels like eating cake (or drinking, or overworking, or surfing the web, etc.) is solving anxiety because it does distract us, it does take us into a whole different place for a moment. But as soon as we stop actively avoiding it, it comes back.

As with resistance and reaction, avoidance isn’t a helpful way to deal with anxiety. Thankfully, there’s another option, and I want to encourage you to try it. That option is to actively accept it. Now I’m going to teach you why it works and how to do it.
Option Four: Acceptance

The key is to actively accept the anxiety that confronts you. I use the word “actively” because it’s important that you don’t see acceptance as giving up. When working with my weight loss clients, I teach them that they have to—and it’s not negotiable—accept their bodies the way they are in this moment before they can ever change. When I say that to my clients, they often say to me, “That’s giving up. If I accept this body, I won’t change it.” I remind them that the exact opposite is true: When you accept something and own something, that’s when you have all the authority and power to change it.

Active acceptance requires you to get to work. It’s not something you can just do passively. It requires that you quietly witness and observe. Numerous studies reveal that the act of observing something is a crucial requirement for change. By accepting our bodies, we have the power to observe and make changes. By observing our own anxiety, we experience a moment of relief and a moment of perspective. Think about the concept of being allowed to do something. Think about the word “allow.” If you allow yourself to do something, it immediately gives you authority over it. You feel empowered because you’re allowing it. It’s the same with our emotions. When we’re little children, our parents allow us to do things. As someone who’s feeling anxiety, if I allow the anxiety, I all of a sudden have a sense of authority, a sense of control, and even sometimes a sense of mastery.

Allowing anxiety doesn’t make the anxiety go away, and, in fact, it’s kind of the opposite. But as soon as I allow it, my sense of control comes back. Think about that when you’re feeling anxious. You can allow it instead of resisting it, reacting to it, or avoiding it. The phrase that I like to use with myself is “stay and let it be.” When you allow anxiety, you’re saying to yourself that it’s quite harmless. It just buzzes around. When you stay with it and you let it be, that’s all it is—just a vibration.

Our Thoughts Create Anxiety

There seems to be this idea that we should be comfortable all the time. I don’t think that’s true. I think that probably half of my endeavors will be a total disaster. I feel so much relief when I think that. Half the things I do in my life are going to be mistakes, and that’s OK. Half of the emotions I’m going to feel in my life are going to be uncomfortable and negative, and that’s OK. That’s what it means to be a human being. I’ve been telling myself this a lot lately, and I can’t even tell you how much peace it gives me. Knowing that I’m uncomfortable with anxiety and knowing that it’s part of my human experience helps immensely. Knowing that anxiety is one of those emotions that’s kept me and my ancestors alive this long is consoling.
Before getting into the techniques to reduce anxiety, I want you to realize that you can start changing your relationship with anxiety. You can see that, yes, it’s no longer as useful as it used to be, but it’s still here, and it’s still part of you. If you know this and understand it, it doesn’t have to overtake your life, and you don’t have to react to it, resist it, or avoid it.

First and foremost, in order to accept the anxiety, remind yourself nothing has gone wrong: it’s just anxiety. Remember that this doesn’t mean you’re giving up. It means you’re taking your power back. Then remember that, as with fear and the victim mentality, thoughts cause it.

Whenever we’re feeling anxious, it’s because we’re having a thought. Think of a time you’re sitting at home alone, and you hear a noise outside. The noise doesn’t cause you anxiety. Your thoughts do. Let’s say there is actually somebody wearing a black mask outside your door, and you see them. Even then, they aren’t causing you to feel anxious. It’s your thought that you’re going to die that’s causing you to feel anxious. It’s really important to remember this. Now, let’s look at three techniques that reduce anxiety: writing it down, playing with it, and belly breathing.

**Technique Number One: Write It Down**

When you’re feeling anxious, and you remind yourself that the reason you’re feeling anxious is because of what you’re thinking, then you can be curious about what you’re thinking. The way that I like to deal with this—especially when I’m really anxious and I feel tempted to fall into a fight-or-flight response—is to sit down and write all my thoughts down.

So many times what’s going on in there is crazy town. I think, “Seriously, this is what I’m thinking today?” I have thoughts that are so illogical they make no sense, but I just let them go, and I just write. What I most often notice is that I’m simply feeling anxious, and it makes sense because of my crazy thoughts.

**Thoughts Are Choices**

Yes, these thoughts feel anxious. But these thoughts are not reality. These thoughts are not facts. These thoughts are choices that you’re choosing. I don’t necessarily try to immediately change those thoughts and go to happy land. I just notice this is the cause of my anxiety.

When you understand the cause of something, you’re twenty million times closer to resolving any emotion that you’re having than if you’re trying to change it, fight it, or ignore it. So the first thing to do is to write down all your thoughts and get them out of your head and onto a piece of paper.
Remember Why the Feeling Originated

After writing your thoughts down, remind yourself that the reason you’re feeling anxious is that you’re thinking all these thoughts, and that’s OK. Don’t try to change it. Don’t beat yourself up for your thoughts. It’s not useful. Just look at the thoughts and be like, “I get it,” and let it just be, let yourself just understand.

If you’re in a hurry to get out of anxiety, it’s because you aren’t allowing it. You’re afraid of feeling it, and that’s not useful. The better you are at allowing it and feeling it, the easier it will be to move through it. The next thing I recommend is that you actively and specifically describe anxiety.

Describe It to an Alien

I will give you the same visual that I have used in a lot of my classes. I used to say, “I want you to imagine that there’s an alien, a cute little friendly alien, that’s visiting from a system of planets that we don’t understand. Imagine that you have this cute little alien, but they don’t feel emotion, they don’t experience emotion, and they don’t even know what an emotion is. You’re trying to describe to them exactly what anxiety feels like. You’re not just going to say, ‘Oh my gosh, it’s horrible.’ You’re going to describe how it feels in your body, including where exactly do you feel it and what exactly it feels like.”

Be Specific

The more specific you can be, the better. You can start with the bottom of your body, going from your toes to your feet to your chin. Do you feel it in those places? If you do, where exactly do you feel it? In your hips? In your chest? Do you feel it in your shoulders? If you feel it in your shoulders, what exactly does it feel like in your shoulders?

The more specifically you can describe it, the better. This gets you out of it. It gets you observing, and it gets you describing it. When I describe it on paper and then read the description,
I alternate between positive thinking and paralyzing fear. When I got home I started to feel the fear/anxiety again and tried your technique—sat on the couch and cried it out, then tried to talk to myself about what I was really feeling and I could not identify much physical component. So I decided to cook dinner instead and when the anxious thoughts tried to start I told them they missed their time on the couch and they can come back tomorrow. I felt better. I do feel better when I think positive framing thoughts about the future.

it works wonders for me. I see that it’s not that big of a deal, and I wonder why I’m I doing so many things to avoid it. When I allow it, when I pay attention to it, it’s not that big of a deal. Really, it’s not. It’s when I react to it, when I avoid it, or when I resist it that it becomes a much bigger deal.

To sum up, the first thing you can do is a thought download, and then you need to describe it in detail as if you’re describing an emotion for someone who has no idea what it’s like. The next thing you can do, and a lot of my clients do this with good results, is what I call playing with anxiety.

**Technique Number Two: Play with It**

A lot of times when we’re feeling anxious, it helps to play with the anxiety. One of the things that I like to suggest to clients who feel a lot of anxiety coming on, but before they’re in a full-on panic attack, is to give themselves worry time—anxiety time in which they can just allow themselves to feel anxious. I encourage them to allow themselves to go to the worst-case scenario. I tell them to plan the anxiety and feel it on purpose.

Further, one of the things that I encourage my clients to do during this time is to try to increase their anxiety. I know this is counterintuitive, especially if you’re someone that resists anxiety. But resisting the anxiety is what can lead to a panic attack, where you feel completely out of control. If you practice increasing your anxiety, over time you’ll learn to get a better grasp on it.

Practicing the skill of increasing your anxiety lets you see that you’re in control of it because if you can increase it, you can also decrease it. Deliberately sitting down and playing with it, increasing it and decreasing it, is an empowering process. Also, if you’re feeling anxious throughout the day, you can say, “I have my anxiety time,” or “I’m going to allow myself to feel anxious. That’s coming up in a couple hours.”

— LAURA
You can delegate it to that time. You can allow it to come up. You then know it’s going to come up, but in the meantime, you can finish cooking dinner. You don’t have to resist it because you know that you can feel it during its apportioned time. By having that time to experience the anxiety fully, you’re in the process of authority because you’re allowing it. You’re in control of it because you’re increasing it and decreasing it, playing with it, and experiencing it. I’ve had clients do this for as little as ten minutes a day, which proved unbelievably helpful for them.

**Technique Number Three: Belly Breathing**

The last technique I’ll explain here, and this is probably the most common and most obvious, is breathing. Panic attacks are created and perpetuated by resisting anxiety and not breathing. I had a panic attack at a restaurant when something very small got caught in my throat, and I thought I was choking. If I would have relaxed and allowed myself to breathe in the air that I could breathe in, it would have been a completely different experience for me. I would have been able to relax my windpipe and get a lot more air in than I was getting. My panicking, freaking out, resisting it, and reacting was terribly detrimental. It’s impossible to have a full-blown panic attack while breathing deeply.

**How, Exactly, to Breathe**

I’m a yogi. I love yoga, and we spend a lot of time learning how to breathe in yoga, which is amazing and very calming. Of course, I forgot all of it when I thought I was choking! This experience motivated me to research how other people deal with breathing and use breathing when it comes to anxiety.

When someone tells you just to breathe, it’s very nondescript. Two of the techniques that I learned about, that I think are really helpful, are belly breathing and exhaling sufficiently. When you’re feeling super anxious—when you have a lot of anxiety because you’ve been resisting and reacting to it—it’s important to remember to breathe into your belly and to fully exhale.

**Belly Breathing and Exhaling Sufficiently**

One of the things you can do is put your hand on your belly as you breathe. Push your belly out so you can feel your belly full of air. Then exhale. One of the pieces of research that I read was about how, when people are having panic attacks, they focus on exhaling. I thought this was fascinating because when I was having my panic attack, I was just trying to suck in the air. I needed air. But the issue isn’t in the inhale. The issue is in the exhale. If, when you’re having a panic attack or when you’re feeling really anxious, you can focus on slowly exhaling all of your air, getting all of the stale air out of your body, then the inhale becomes much easier.
I worked on this, and I encourage you to as well, so you know how it feels. Exhale all your air. Then inhale into your belly. Put your hand on your belly so you can feel it expand. This is a great help for allowing yourself to feel anxious when you feel like you want to avoid it by eating. Don’t even tell yourself to breathe in. Just sit down and exhale ten times. Put your hand on your belly, fill your belly with air, and then exhale. Just focus on that piece of it ten times. That can blow your mind.

Because you’re in the space of allowing, you’re connected. You’re increasing your consciousness of yourself, which is going to be uncomfortable. It’s not like you’re going to be in this glorious, meditative state. Please don’t plan on that. I tell this to my clients all the time. For example, I ask, “What do you think it would be like when you stop overeating?” They all say, “It’d be fantastic and wonderful and rainbows and daisies and beautiful and I’ll be thin.” But I tell them the reality is that it’s not a glorious, fantastic feeling. I tell them that what happens when you stop overeating is you start feeling the negative emotion that you’re trying to avoid.

Being aware of that is really helpful. If I don’t overeat, I will instead be introduced to myself and to my negative emotion, and that is part of the process. When I allow an emotion, I can metabolize that emotion. I can process it through. It doesn’t have to stay around festering because I’m avoiding it.

One of the best ways to do that is to sit down and exhale—to allow the emotion and exhale it out. Give yourself ten breaths. Remember that it won’t be pleasant. It won’t be enjoyable, but you can do this. This is part of the process of tuning into yourself, of being connected with yourself, and of being truly in control of your life and your emotions. Exhale it and don’t expect yourself to feel amazing afterward. Don’t expect that the anxiety will completely go away. Just know that you’ve owned it. You’ve accepted it, and therefore you are in control.

**FINAL THOUGHTS ON OVERCOMING ANXIETY**

Anxiety doesn't mean that something is terribly wrong. Anxiety means that you’re an evolved human being—that you’re alive. Anxiety is an emotion that most of us will experience on a regular basis. It’s not a problem until we make it a problem by resisting it, reacting to it, or avoiding it. I want to encourage you to actively accept it by writing down the thoughts that are causing it, by describing it in detail, by playing with it, and by breathing through it. Realize that the thoughts are just your thinking. They are not you. Can you breathe anxiety? If you allow yourself to feel the emotion, you’ll own it. You get to decide what to do with your feelings of anxiety.
PART TWO

How to Uncover and Address Two Commonly Hidden Obstacles
Now we’re going to switch gears a bit and take a look at the victim mentality. You know, when the reason someone gives for not reaching their goals or for not being who they want to be is because they’re a victim of mistreatment by others, or a bad environment, or that they’re misunderstood (and the list goes on)....

Wait! Don’t skip ahead. I know what you’re thinking. You’re thinking, “That’s not me!”

Hear me out. You, like me and a number of my clients, might be experiencing the victim mentality without knowing it. So many of my clients would never present with, “Hey, I’m a victim,” in spite of the fact that they did have the victim mentality. I had it too, for many years. But I didn’t realize it. I thought I was a very strong, capable woman. I thought, “How could I possibly have this victim mentality?”—but I totally did.

I’m going to describe it so you can determine whether or not it’s affecting you. Be careful, because it’s sometimes pretty sneaky. It can be justified, especially if you know you’ve been harmed in some way in your past, but that doesn’t mean you should let it control you. On the other hand, you may not be aware of any harm done, yet find that you do demonstrate the victim mentality. Regardless, one of the things that’s important to remember is that when you identify as a victim, no matter the reason, you’re losing all of your power, and it affects the way that you live.
NOT A WEAKNESS: JUST A BELIEF PATTERN

Before I explain the indicators of the victim mentality, I just want to say that the victim mentality is not a sign of weakness. It’s a belief pattern that we’ve established in our brains that affects our lives, but it doesn’t mean that we aren’t intelligent, capable, amazing people. It certainly doesn’t mean that we’re not strong. It just means that we have this mentality, this particular looping in our brains. It’s very similar with my weight loss clients and their diet mentality. It’s a way of thinking about food and diet and eating that perpetuates their entire life. It’s the same with the victim mentality. And as with the diet mentality, it can be remedied.

INDICATORS OF THE VICTIM MENTALITY

Blame

The main way that I see the victim mentality show up in my clients is with blame. But they don’t see it as blame. They see it as an explanation as to why they’re miserable. It’s someone else’s fault. If her husband ran the business better, or if her boyfriend hadn’t abused her years ago, if she didn’t have such a nightmare of a boss... Right? Giving others all the power for how we feel is the victim mentality. It’s completely abdicating responsibility for our negative thoughts because of some powerful perpetrator in our lives. Take a look at your thoughts over the course of a few days or weeks. Do you blame anyone else for things that you don’t like about yourself, or for other negative thoughts that you feel? Then it’s very possible that you do indeed suffer from the victim mentality.

Defensiveness

Building on the subject of blaming and how it relates to the victim mentality, let’s take a look at defensiveness. Answer these questions for me: Is there someone in your life that you think is the cause of your pain? Is there someone in your life that you feel is causing you a lot of trouble? If yes, do you understand that you’re blaming someone and that you suffer from the victim mentality? Now, if you felt defensive when I asked that question—if you felt like, “Whoa, she doesn’t know my life. My situation is very different!”—or if you felt like you needed to puff up and maybe explain it to me, then you may be experiencing the victim mentality, because it’s rife with defensiveness. I agree with Byron Katie when she says that defense is the first act of war. If you feel like you need to defend yourself against other people, you’re probably in the victim mentality.

Hiding

Another characteristic that you’ll see in yourself or others who suffer from the victim mentality is that you want to hide. You avoid the spotlight. You don’t share your feelings. You don’t express yourself. It makes sense, right? If we feel like we’re being victimized, we don’t want to put ourselves out there because someone might attack us.
Complaining

If you have the victim mentality, you’ll catch yourself complaining a lot. You’ll be negative. I know that for me, when I was in that space of being in the victim mentality (and by the way, I still am sometimes), I’d complain about how I was being treated, I’d blame other people. It’s a habitual thought process that spins into self pity and feeling sorry for yourself and feeling trapped. Take note of the words you say. Are you often negative? Do you complain a lot? Do you make excuses for your behavior? Maybe these things are indicators of your victim mentality.

It’s All About You

You’ll notice that when someone is a “victim,” they’re always the target of someone else. What I mean by that is not necessarily that they’d say, “They attacked me,” but maybe they’d say, “They did something to me.” It’s how they tell stories that involve themselves and others.

If somebody doesn’t invite you to a party, for example, you may think, “They excluded me on purpose.” However, what really happened is that they just didn’t invite you. It doesn’t mean that they did anything to you. In fact, they may not have even thought of you. They may have had one of a thousand reasons, logistical or otherwise, for not inviting you. But you spin the facts to make it seem that they did something to you—that you’re the victim of their invite list. You can’t help but make it about you.

EVERY VICTIM NEEDS A VILLAIN

Most people acquire the victim mentality as a result of things that happened many years ago. They’ve usually had an episode in their past where they were a victim, maybe even as a child, and they’ve adopted the mentality even though that event is long over. As with everything, there are a variety of reasons that people adopt a victim mentality, but I think it would be helpful for me to share my reason for having a victim mentality because my experience is pretty common.

When I was really spinning out the victim mentality, I was always referencing my childhood. I was always referencing events that happened to me when I was a child to justify my victim mentality. I believe that I was justified in having the victim mentality, but it certainly never did me any good.

For me, it was my relationship with my dad and how he treated my mom and me. It left me feeling like a victim. Even the way I thought about it long after my father had passed away was still to identify myself as a victim. I kept blaming him for everything negative that was going on in my life, which, when you think about it, doesn’t make any sense. My dad was long gone. He had passed away of alcoholism, and I was still living my life as if he were my perpetrator.
I wrote a blog post a couple of years ago that was titled, “Every Victim Needs a Villain.” It’s true, and I see that as a pattern in my life. As the victim, I’m looking for someone to blame. As soon as I find someone to blame, I put them (and I do this subconsciously) in the position of the villain and myself in the position of the victim.

Even though I could get lots of people to agree with me that it’s true, and even though it’s justified that I do that, I’m still the victim. The problem with being the victim is that I’ve now given all my power to the perpetrator. I’ve done this inadvertently in my mind, but I’m also acting it out. I’m creating feelings of helplessness, disempowerment, anger, and fear within myself. Oftentimes, the person whom I’ve identified as my perpetrator doesn’t even know that’s what I’m doing. Yet I’ve created this reality where they’re in charge of how I feel.

I’ll say something like, “I’m just so pissed that they did that to me. I’m just so hurt that they did that.” Usually, when I think about the person that I’ve identified as my perpetrator, I’d never delegate my emotional life to that person, but that’s exactly what I’ve done. Never would I consciously choose to be the victim in any situation, but that’s exactly what I’ve done.

However, this doesn’t have to be what I do. I have a choice. We all have a choice. We can all choose not to be a victim, and therefore, not allow a villain or perpetrator to be responsible for our thoughts, words, decisions, and actions. Let’s see what that looks like...

**ONE INDISCREET REMARK: TWO OPPOSITE REACTIONS**

Let me give you an example of how the victim mentality doesn’t serve me and how my choice determines the outcome in terms of how I feel. Let’s say I go to a family dinner party. At the family dinner party, one of the members of my family says something to me that is derogatory, like, “Everybody thinks you’re crazy,” which is something that could totally happen at my dinner table. Let’s say someone said that to me. I could immediately go into this place of feeling hurt and projecting hate and frustration and anger onto this person who’s a member of my family. Then, I could go complain to my husband about how rude everybody is and especially this person and about how she’s so mean. In doing so, I’ve just spun myself out into feeling sorry for myself and blaming someone else. That’s the victim mentality.

Alternatively, I could go to that exact same dinner party, and someone, a member of my family who I care about, could say something like that to me, and I could instead think, “That’s your opinion. Maybe your opinion is true, and maybe there are a lot of people that would agree with you, but it has nothing to do with me, and I’m not going to take that on. I’m certainly not going to spin out into a space where I’m giving you control of how I feel emotionally.” I get to decide in that moment how I want to feel about that comment and about that person. In those situations, I choose not to
go into the victim mentality because I choose not to give my power away to that person. In fact, I've found that I don't want to be angry or upset in those situations because it doesn't serve any purpose. It just makes me feel angry and upset.

What do I say in those situations? I'll say things like, “OK, that was an unnecessary comment. Can we move on?” or “That’s an interesting opinion. Ha ha!” It’s usually after someone’s had too much to drink that these types of crazy comments, like the one in the example I just used, come out. Usually, the person who says them doesn’t have full control of their thoughts and actions. My point here is that I’m in charge of my feelings, and when I choose not to let things like this get to me, it changes my experience of the world for the better, and it changes how often I feel victimized.

I attempt to always take responsibility for how I feel in my life, for how I feel in every moment. I recognize that it’s my responsibility to determine how I feel because all of my feelings are caused by my thinking.

RISING ABOVE CARELESS ACTIONS VS. BEING A DOORMAT

Often, when I introduce this concept to students, they’ll come back and say, “Aren’t you just being a doormat? I mean, if somebody can just say whatever they want to you and you don’t get upset or you don’t say anything back, aren’t you just being a doormat?” I think the opposite is true. I think that when somebody says something, and you allow it to devastate you, you’ve given all your power to that other person you’ve identified as the villain. And that’s being much more of a doormat than when you allow people to be who they are and say what they’ll say—especially if it’s to you.

It doesn’t mean that you don’t say something back. It just means that you don’t say something back out of anger or out of a negative emotion that you’ve created based on what they’ve said. I mean, if somebody says something to you that’s derogatory, and you just blow them off, it’s a completely different experience than if you cowered down and lashed out like an emotional child. That person’s opinion and what that person says has everything to do with that person and nothing to do with you.

In fact, when you’re able to handle situations in this way, you stay in your integrity. You stay in your emotional happiness, and the person with the inappropriate comment appears to themselves, and to everyone else, as being in the negative place that they are. Because, typically, people say unthoughtful things when they aren’t being aware, when they aren’t paying attention, and when they aren’t in a positive place. Most people who are in a positive place say nice, wonderful things. So you can either go down to that level and accept their negative comment or action as a victim, or you can handle it as someone who is not a victim. Very different experience.
Now, I want to add one more thing. That doesn’t mean that in that moment, when they said that, you don’t actually experience a negative emotion like humiliation or shame. It doesn’t mean that you pretend to yourself that you’re not experiencing that. It’s just that you don’t dwell on it and let it get to you. You rise above it, and that’s not being a doormat.

YOUR NEGATIVE EMOTIONS ARE DUE TO YOUR OWN THOUGHTS

Let’s take a closer look at the thoughts you feel in response to a real or perceived negative experience. The reason for your negative emotion in that moment is because of a thought you’re thinking—it’s not because of what they said. I cannot emphasize how important that distinction is, because if I’m the reason that I’m feeling shame in that moment, I still have all my power. If I give the credit for feeling shame to that person, then I’ve handed my power over to them, and I’m now in the victim mentality.

Let me give you an example. This is the example I use all the time with my students. If somebody says to you, “I really hate your blue hair,” even though you don’t have blue hair, you’re probably not going to start crying. You’re probably not going to say, “That hurts my feelings.” You’re probably not going to drop into victim mode because there’s no part of you that believes that you have blue hair. Most of you won’t. Some of you could. If you’re into the victim mentality, you could use that as a reason. The reason why you most likely won’t start crying is because no part of you believes what they said.

When somebody says something to you and you do believe it, or there’s a part of you that believes it, that’s when it gets to you. The reason it gets to you is because of the thought you’re thinking that believes the thing they’re saying. Now, this doesn’t mean you have to give your power to them. Often, all it means is that later on you need to have a look at that thought and you need to take care of yourself and try to understand what’s going on with you. It can be an opportunity for you to truly connect with the part of you that does believe that negative comment and, ultimately, change it.

RECOGNIZING AND OVERCOMING THE VICTIM MENTALITY: A REAL EXAMPLE

I have one last example for you about the victim mentality that I think is very powerful. It happened to me just a few years ago. Someone sent me an email that basically read, “I was talking to a colleague of yours that you used to do a lot of work with. Here are all the things that she said about you... .” She listed them, and they were all derogatory, rude things. As I read this list of things that had been said about me, I felt myself get defensive. That defensive feeling was my clue. Whenever you feel yourself get defensive, you have to remind yourself, “Uh-oh, I’m going right into that victim mentality. Poor me. How could they say all this about me? Oh my gosh. I can’t believe they did this to me.” That’s what happened in my mind in about three seconds. Just like that.
When you feel that defensiveness—when you feel yourself getting ready for a fight and needing to defend yourself—that’s the time to take a deep breath and say, “Whoa. I’m not giving in to the victim mentality. I’m not going to turn this person who said these things about me (or the person that emailed them to me!) into my villain. What I’m going to do is just take a deep breath and see why this bothers me.”

Now, when I read through that list, I could find the truth in almost everything that was said. I could see how someone could say that about me (by the way, this realization hits us for most things that stir up emotion in us). For example, if someone says you’re mean, you could probably think of ways you’re mean. If someone says you’re inconsiderate, you could probably think of ways you’re inconsiderate.

So what did I do in this situation? I didn’t defend against that list. I went through the list, and I saw where I could find the truth in all of it. I replied back with, “That’s all true.” And to my relief, that was the end of the discussion. Again, I need to credit Byron Katie for this, another life-changing perspective: When you’re willing to accept the parts of you that aren’t perfect, you maintain your power. It works. That email was an invitation for a brawl, and I immediately went into defensive mode. But then I released it, and it didn’t affect me after that.

The ability to recognize and let go of negative emotions, such as defensiveness, is a magical ability. When you find yourself being defensive, if you can find a way to release that desire to fight and to defend yourself, to know that there’s nothing that needs to be defended, that other people can have whatever opinions they want, and that you don’t have to argue with them to prove your worth because you know your worth—that’s a game changer. That’s what vulnerability is. It’s a positive alternative to the victim mentality. Let’s take a closer look at vulnerability and why it yields strength to those who understand and embrace it.

**Vulnerability: A Replacement for the Victim Mentality**

Vulnerability is very different than the victim mentality, and I’ll show you why. First, though, one can’t talk about vulnerability without mentioning Brené Brown. Brené Brown wrote a book called *Daring Greatly*. We read it two years ago in my Master Coach class. It’s a game changer. It’s a life changer. It’s a beautifully written book. It’s written by someone who has researched both shame and vulnerability extensively.

Brené really has a way of teaching about vulnerability. A lot of people, when they think about vulnerability, think about weakness. They think of an army on a battlefield that lacks sufficient weaponry. But, as Brené explains, vulnerability is being willing to experience any emotion that comes up for you. The reason why her book is titled *Daring Greatly* is because vulnerability
I thought that I was showing up with a sense of vulnerability, but the reality has been I have been playing the victim. And I have been playing it for so long, yet I expect others to be vulnerable. This was really eye opening, and I plan on doing the work.

-SKYE

requires courage. I encourage you to read her book if you’d like a thorough understanding of this subject.

What does it mean to be willing to feel any emotion that comes up—any emotion that you create with your mind? It means that you’re going to have to be courageous. You’re going to have to walk into that experience with yourself and know that there is no emotion that can kill you, and there is no emotion that will ever require you to hide from yourself. In this day and age, it’s one of your best assets. It’s the opposite of the victim mentality, which creates defensiveness and learned helplessness.

**Vulnerability in Relationships**

When you’re in a relationship with someone whom you love deeply, the ability to be vulnerable is crucial, because they will say and do things that will trigger you to think and feel things that may be difficult.

If you’re in the victim mentality, you’re going to try to escape (hide) from those triggers. You’re going to reject anything that’s said to you that isn’t wonderful and loving. And you’re going to try to control that person, so they’ll only say things that you want them to say because you’re so terrified of them being a perpetrator.

What’s interesting about the victim mentality is that it can make people act crazy and controlling in their relationships. On the surface, that doesn’t seem like a victim mentality. It seems like the person is dominating and taking charge of the situation by controlling. But underneath, there’s an immense fear of feeling that emotion—that negative emotion.

Vulnerability is the opposite. It’s like, “Bring it on. I’m willing to put myself into intense, wonderful, risk-taking, life-altering situations because I’m willing to feel any emotion.” We’re willing to expose ourselves to our emotions without defense, without avoiding, without hiding. It’s a mature and loving quality to bring to all of our relationships.
STRENGTH THROUGH VULNERABILITY

If you’re able to hear someone’s feedback, hear someone’s opinion, or hear whatever they’re saying without being defensive, that’s the deepest form of intimacy. That’s true not only with other people that you love in your life but also with yourself. When you can accept your opinion of yourself without getting defensive and without starting a battle, that’s vulnerability. That’s where so much strength lies.

Think about it: If I’m willing to sit across from you at a table and hear your opinion of me, whether it’s good or bad, that’s vulnerability—especially if I’m not going to defend myself or attack you. I’m just going to be in that space. That requires so much strength.

What that person says to me may bring up a lot of my emotion. If I can take responsibility for being the creator of that emotion, whether I’m believing them or not, then I am in the power position. Not only that, but I can also engage with that person and connect with that person no matter what.

That’s where that unconditional love comes in, and that’s where intimacy comes in between two people. It’s a beautiful, beautiful thing. It’s the opposite of the victim mentality, which in that situation would probably lead to blame.

VULNERABILITY AND WEIGHT CONTROL

Being vulnerable is not only beneficial to relationships, it can help with other areas of life too, such as with physical health and weight loss. As a weight loss coach, I’ve witnessed how it helps in this area, and I thought you’d appreciate some of my observations. Many of my weight loss clients don’t take responsibility for negative emotions. I share that tendency, and I can see now how it was an obstacle to me before I figured out what to do with them.

It is so important to become aware and notice when we are in this mentality and not taking full and radical responsibility for everything in our lives, including our emotions. I have started this process a while ago, and I can honestly say that my life is so much richer, fuller, and happier.

– RENI
If my clients and I sensed a negative emotion rising up in ourselves, we’d avoid it completely by eating every single thing in the house. Then we’d beat ourselves up for eating every single thing in the house. It was a pretty good distractor from any emotion that we were going through.

When I did this, I felt so out of control. When I really thought about it, I identified myself as the victim of myself. I was both perpetrator and victim. Just like with fear, the victim mentality doesn’t necessarily originate outside of you. You can be your own villain and your own victim. It’s very clever how we do this with ourselves.

Now, if I’m willing to be vulnerable instead of eating—to be open without defenses for whatever emotions come up, instead of escaping them by eating—then I don’t need to eat. I don’t need to avoid myself by overeating. I don’t need fifteen Oreos. I can experience whatever emotion is coming up for me, and I can hear myself out.

Not only that, but I can also find the cause. I can find the thinking pattern that’s creating the emotion and then I can change it. That choice to experience the emotion, done over and over and over again, eliminates the need for overeating. When you eliminate the need for overeating, you lose weight, and that basically sums up what I do with my weight loss clients.

You cannot discover that reason if you aren’t willing to be vulnerable with yourself. If you have an issue with overeating, notice how often you choose the victim mentality. Do you blame the program you’re on? Do you blame the food you’re eating? Do you blame people who bring food into your house? Do you blame the Girl Scouts for coming to your door with cookies? Who are you blaming for your weight gain? Are you blaming yourself? Are you playing both the victim and the villain? Because that will get you nowhere. The ability to be vulnerable and feel your feelings will give you the power you need.
YOU ARE ENOUGH

One of the beliefs that we’re defending when we have this victim mentality is the idea that there’s something wrong with us. When you identify yourself as a victim, it’s usually paired with some flavor of, “There’s something wrong with me. I’m not like other people.” It’s a pattern. Vulnerability, on the other hand, is knowing that you are enough. You are perfect exactly the way you are. Now, that doesn’t mean perfect by societal standards. It means perfect in the way that you were created.

I’m always telling my students, “You don’t get to decide whether you’re enough or not because that’s clearly already been decided. You are here. You are enough.” When you can believe that, no matter what emotion comes up, you know it doesn’t mean that there’s something wrong with you. It just means you’re having an emotion. That’s when you can tap into vulnerability, where all your strength is.

Remember, if you’re willing to feel any emotion, there is nothing that’s too scary to do, because the reason why something is scary is because you don’t want to feel fear. If you’re willing to feel the fear—if you’re willing to hear the feedback because you’re willing to feel any emotion that comes up from that—that is your power play. That is your strength. That is where vulnerability will trump the victim mentality any day of the week.

Before we move on past our overview of the victim mentality, I’d like you to ask yourself some questions. Asking myself these questions is something I do pretty regularly and recommend to all my students. Have a good look at your life and ask yourself, “Where am I unwilling to feel my emotions? Where am I avoiding them? What things aren’t I doing? What dreams aren’t I pursuing? What conversations am I unwilling to have because I don’t want to feel the emotion that I’m going to create?” Also ask, “Who am I blaming for how I feel? When I feel anger, who am I blaming? When I feel sadness, who am I blaming? Am I blaming myself? Am I blaming other people? Am I being vulnerable and open and willing to feel whatever comes up? If so, can I feel it all the way through and can I identify the thought pattern that’s causing it? Can I take one hundred percent of the responsibility for how I feel?”

Ask yourself those questions, and then if you find that you’re a victim, start working on being more vulnerable with yourself and with others. Feel those emotions that you’ve been avoiding. You’ll be on your way toward more peace, better relationships, and maybe even a slimmer body.
One of the things I struggle with a lot is self doubt. I think it’s so interesting when people say to me, “It doesn’t seem like you have any self doubt. It seems like you’re very confident.” I think that I am confident, and I think one of the reasons why I’m able to generate confidence is because I do my work on self doubt. The fact that I’m confident doesn’t mean that self doubt doesn’t come up for me. Self doubt also comes up in my classes. I spend a lot of time helping students and clients deal with self doubt, so I thought it would be a good topic to include for you in this book. I’m including it in Part Two because self doubt often presents as a hidden obstacle. It will trick you into thinking that your inability to do something is a simple fact. In reality, your perceived inability may be self doubt in disguise.

**SELF COACHING PRACTICE AND INTROSPECTION**

Sometimes I get asked about what I do in terms of my own personal self coaching. Much of what I do is to sit down and take time to record my thoughts. I have a look at them, and I use my coaching models on my thinking. I use them to see what kinds of thoughts I’m creating. I also receive coaching from other coaches, and I receive coaching from students in my classes because I offer up my situations and my struggles as examples for my students and clients.

I’m involved in my mind, and I do manage it very carefully. If I experience severe emotional turmoil, which does happen, I sit down and do that work on myself. It’s almost intolerable for me now to just let my mind be running around without supervision.

Allowing my mind to go off on its own creates so many problems within my body and within my life, whereas the results that I get from coaching are fulfilling and astounding.

I wanted to mention this hard work that I do with my own mind as a preface to what I’m about to discuss about successful people. I want to emphasize that everyone feels self doubt, but that you have to work through it to find success. You have to work hard at it. Self doubt is unlike the obstacles we covered in the previous chapters (fear, anxiety, and the victim mentality) because it isn’t as urgent. It’s not knocking at our doors all the time, aggravating us with intense emotions. It just sits there silently.
I realized that the label I stuck to my dream was rooted in self doubt and it came from a place of scarcity and fear. Of course, I wasn’t going to go all out to try and make it happen for myself! Why would I? If I believed that the only thing that could kick me into action was some kind of personal catastrophe, I would do anything and everything to avoid it! This was a real wake-up call.

— JACQUES

This is a problem because if we want to overcome an obstacle, we need to work on it. But if we forget about it, we don’t give it the needed time and attention. If we forget about self doubt, only remembering it when we have the inspiration to do something great, and then make an excuse not to follow the inspiration—as happens when we suffer from self doubt—it just goes back to its hiding place.

WHY SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE EXPERIENCE SELF DOUBT

One of the misconceptions that people have about anyone who’s successful is that they don’t experience self doubt. I think there’s this idea that once someone is successful, they’re all done with insecurity and they’re all done with self doubt. But that’s just not true.

We look at successful or famous people, and we think that because they’re making so much money and because they’re doing so well in their lives that they can’t possibly be plagued with the kind of worry and self doubt and frustration that we feel. I’ve found that to be completely untrue. One of the things that I’ve decided, based on years of observing myself and my clients, is that whenever you evolve—whenever you decide to go to the next level—you’re going to be plagued with self doubt. I think that it’s part of the deal, and that’s why a lot of people don’t pursue evolving. They avoid the feeling, they avoid the work needed to overcome it, and they don’t reach the level of success they desire. Meanwhile, they watch others find success. They assume that the others don’t experience self doubt, but what they don’t realize is that the others are working through it with every step.

Self Doubt Accompanies Real Growth

So many people don’t want to keep growing—they don’t want to put themselves out there—because they don’t want to have to deal with the discomfort that comes with each new evolution. They try to hide—and when I say “they,” I also mean me. There are so many examples of this in my own life where I tried
to take an escape route instead of having to deal with my self doubt and my frustrations with myself. I just didn’t want to do it. I didn’t want to have a goal that was so big that it brought up all that crap again and again and again. What I found was that all of those escape routes just led to different flavors of misery. So I embraced the goals and the discomfort.

There’s this pull that I have, this desire that I feel that leads me to the life that I’m destined to have. I think that there’s this idea that if we’re on the right path and if we’re going toward our destiny, that if we’re following our desires and we’re honoring our true wants and our truths, that it will feel like rainbows or like a Popsicle on a hot day. However, I feel like I’m living that life—the life I’m destined to live—and very rarely does it feel like anything but a lot of effort to overcome that negativity within me. I don’t think that’s a bad thing. We feel like we’re entitled to have an easy life. I’m not sure where we picked up that idea. But the truth is that real growth in life will always be accompanied by some uncomfortable feelings, including self doubt.

So, what are some things we can do about self doubt? How can we identify it and work with it? And how can we work to increase our confidence? Let’s take a look.

**IDENTIFY YOUR SELF DOUBT**

Notice how you doubt yourself. What do you say to yourself? Do you say, “There’s no man out there for me,” “I’ll never be able to fit into that dress,” or “I’m too old (or too young) to do that”? That’s self doubt, right? You’re doubting your abilities, or your capacity to find someone you’d want to spend the rest of your life with. If you’re considering life coaching, you might say, “The coaching industry just isn’t supportive of what I want to do.” But I can tell you that’s certainly not true because there are a lot of coaches out there killing it right now. You’re just doubting yourself and your ability to be a successful coach. Those are just a few examples of self doubt, and I’m sure you can think of many others.
Self doubt is all on you. You’re doubting your ability. If there’s another person that can do and have what you want, then your doubt is self doubt. You’re doubting yourself. Our opinions of the obstacles between us and our desired result are what determine how much self doubt we have. If you want to lose forty pounds, what are the obstacles to losing forty pounds? You could list overeating, going out to eat, fast-food restaurants, getting too hungry, eating when you’re bored.... What are your obstacles, and what do you make them mean?

**HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE OBSTACLES?**

Once you’ve identified your flavor of self doubt and the related obstacles you face, you should then ask yourself, “What is my opinion of each of those obstacles?” When you ask that, what you’re really asking is, “What do I think about those obstacles?” Do you think it’s going to be impossible not to stop for fast food on the way home? That opinion is breeding self doubt.

On the other hand, if your opinion is, “Yes, that will be an obstacle, and yes, I will face it, and yes, I will deal with it, and I will understand it. I will have compassion for it, and I will not act on it. I will be in control of my mind and my feelings and my actions,” that opinion is going to breed commitment and determination to achieve what it is you want to achieve. It’s always a choice. You can always commit. You can always commit to self doubt, or you can commit to your goal.

It’s always a choice. Self doubt is a pretty knee-jerk reaction for most of us. Here’s something I was thinking about recently, which I find interesting. Considering our evolution again, in the past we didn’t have a choice to doubt. We couldn’t sit around all day saying to ourselves, “I don’t know if I’m going to be able to do this. I don’t know if I’m going to be able to outrun this. I don’t know if I’m going to be able to survive.” We just didn’t have time. We didn’t have the luxury of sitting around and thinking about what we were capable of. We just either got to work or we didn’t, and if we didn’t, maybe we died.

Now we have so many options. We have so many escape routes. One of the things I suggested to a client I was working with was, “What if you remove all your escape routes and didn’t give yourself so many choices to indulge in self doubt? What if you just went all in?” What if you said, “I’m going in and I know that self doubt will come with me, but I will not entertain it. I will not engage in it. I will listen to it, I will understand it, but I will not let it be the boss of me. I’m in charge.” This really is an important concept: What is your opinion of the obstacles in front of you?

Here’s another question to consider when it comes to self doubt: What do you think about yourself when you think about yourself? When you think about obstacles in front of you—when you think about the challenges that you have in front of you and your dreams—do you think you’re up for it? Do you think about yourself in a positive, committed, determined way? Do you think
about yourself in terms of self doubt? How much do you engage in the self doubt? Do you remind
yourself that confidence is a choice and that self doubt is a choice?

A lot of thoughts will be threatened when you evolve to the next level. Are you willing to use
certainty to fuel you through that? Do you give in to self doubt, inaction, and reaction? Dreams
expose our doubts. That’s why it’s so amazing to have dreams. I meet a lot of clients who’ve
stopped dreaming, and the reason why is because they don’t want their doubts exposed. I ask,
“Why wouldn’t you want your doubts exposed?” Because once you expose them, then you can
change them. Once you expose them, then you know of them and you can see them for what they
are, which is just thoughts about yourself.

**DOUBT YOUR DOUBT, NOT YOUR GOALS**

We’re entitled to have the strength to overcome our obstacles to achieve greatness within
ourselves. People hear that type of statement and say, “That’s such BS. Nobody needs to be
working that hard. You’re just ambitious.” I don’t think that’s true. I think there’s this sense of pride
that you get from overcoming your problems and arriving on the other side of it, only to start it
again. You do get better at it with every new goal that you write. Think about this for yourself: If
you don’t write goals for yourself, why is that? Why don’t you write goals? Is it because it brings up
all of your self doubt, frustration, and fear?

Do you avoid setting goals because you don’t want to deal with the emotions that are bound to
come to the surface when you reach those goals? If you do reach those goals and those emotions
come up for you, I’d like you to think about that as a natural progression—as what’s supposed
to happen.

When I set a goal for myself, I’m supposed to feel challenged, and I’m supposed to feel self doubt.
From there, I can do the work to overcome that and become the person that I want to be. On top
of that, it’s important to remember that self doubt is a choice. I had a yoga teacher who always
used to say, “Doubt your doubt.” I love that. Truly, if I’m so good at doubting, maybe I should just
doubt my doubt.

Self doubt feels very real when it happens. It feels like it’s something that’s come over us, but it
really is something that we’re creating with our minds. What happens is that we set those goals
and all of a sudden our minds just go wild: “You can’t do that! Who do you think you are? You’re
not capable of that.” Your brain wants to stay in this comfortable pattern of efficiency. Even if the
efficiency is creating negative results in your life, your brain wants to be efficient. When you start
pushing yourself, that’s when your brain kicks in and says, “It will never work. It’s never going to
happen.” Just notice that that is what’s going to come up.
It doesn’t mean that you’re not creating self doubt. It’s a natural reaction to growth. That’s what self doubt is. It’s basically thoughts that don’t support us in our capabilities. When I say capabilities, I mean the capabilities that we can develop and the ones we already have. I believe that our ability to grow is only limited by our self doubt.

Our ability to grow is our ability to move beyond our own doubtful thinking. I thought about this for a long time so I want to make sure I don’t gloss over it. I want to make sure you really just heard that if you want to grow into the next best version of yourself, whatever that looks like for you—maybe it’s more money, maybe it’s a thinner body, maybe it’s better relationships—your ability to grow is your ability to move beyond self doubt.

Are you able to face those doubts? Are you able to overcome them? Most people are, but they see the obstacle and completely run the other way. They defeat themselves by their self doubt. What are you capable of? How do you know what you’re capable of? I would say we’re capable of the things we’re willing to repeatedly try until we increase our capacity to do them.

**TRY FIFTY THINGS**

I was just coaching someone recently, and she told me that she was frustrated with her coaching business because she’s not making any money. I asked her why she wasn’t making any money, and she said nothing seems to work. I asked her how many things she had tried. She listed two. Those two things that she tried required her to overcome a lot of self doubt, just to do those two things, but then she gave up because those things didn’t work out the way she had wanted them to. I asked her, “Would you be willing to try fifty things before you come to the conclusion that you’re not worthy, effective, or capable?”

Think about this: How many times did it take you to learn something new? Remember the example of a child learning to walk? If you’d given up after the first two times of trying to walk, you’d still be crawling. But as we get older we think, “It should
only take one try. If I do it in one try and it doesn’t work, then forget it. If I go on five or ten or twenty dates and I don’t find the man of my dreams, then I’m just going to give up dating. If I can’t get a client in my business within the first week, then I probably shouldn’t be a coach.”

We’ve taken a good look at self doubt and how to recognize it. We’ve also gone over the importance of recognizing obstacles and of pushing past them repeatedly. Now I’m going to switch gears and explain how you can increase your level of confidence. It’s time to examine a proactive approach.

**Steps to Increase Confidence**

Self doubt is just a thought you’re having about yourself. The way that you become more confident is by choosing to believe thoughts in which your opinion of yourself and your opinion of your doubts are strong and motivating and determined. Here’s a process I want you to consider when it comes to increasing confidence.

**Step One: Think About Something You Want**

First, you have to recognize your self doubt thinking. It’s not easy because self doubt will trick you into thinking that it’s true and that it’s reality, and you’re just being realistic. A way to recognize it right now is to think about something you really want. Think about maybe a body you want or an ability you want to develop. Maybe you want a large practice of clients, maybe you want a husband, or maybe you want a child.

**Step Two: Write Down Your Thoughts**

Whatever it is you want, think about it. Now, once you start daydreaming about it and thinking about having it, your brain will immediately be like, “Self-doubt, self-doubt, self-doubt….” Those negative thoughts will come up. Don’t be confused. They’re just thoughts. Write them down. What are all the thoughts that come up? Write them down. Every single one of them.

You’ll be so amazed. When I think that I want to have five thousand people sign up for one of my classes, my brain goes, “This won’t work. This will be hard. There’s not even that many people who would be remotely interested. Remember how that one person said they thought life coaching wasn’t effective? And then there was that other one who said…” It just comes up. There it is: All my self doubt comes flooding to the surface. However, five thousand people sign up, in spite of my self doubt. What I thought was impossible is possible after all. Recognize self doubt for what it is: just self doubt thinking. Then, notice what you feel and do when you think this way.

**Step Three: Notice Your Response to Thoughts of Self Doubt**

When you believe these thoughts—when you attach yourself to them—what do you feel like? What do you do when you feel that way? Pay attention to your response so that you understand
where your thoughts go. Write them down. For example, if I have that idea, such as having five thousand people sign up, but then I have all these thoughts like, “That will never work. It’s too challenging. Seems like a lot of work. I’ll just do something else,” I get sabotaged, right? When I write down my thoughts, I can see what the discouragement looks like. I see how I feel when I read those thoughts. I just feel discouraged. I feel doubtful. I’m filled with self doubt, I take no action, and I react to other things that happen. I react in a way that brings out more self doubt for me.

Step Four: Decide Not to Believe the Negative Thoughts

At that point—once I’ve recognized this pattern that’s my point of power—that’s when I can decide if I want to continue to attach to and believe those thoughts, or if I want to change them. First, I have to recognize that they are thoughts, and then I get to decide if I want to keep entertaining them. Think about this: Do you want to believe that you can’t be successful at losing weight? Do you want to believe that? You are believing it, and you’re choosing to believe it because you’re not choosing to believe something different. I know it doesn’t feel like a choice. It feels like it’s just true, but it’s not. It’s a self doubting thought that you’re attaching to. You believe you have a lot of evidence for it. Is it a thought you want to keep on thinking? Do you want to think that you can’t leave your current job? Do you want to think that your spouse is difficult? Do you want to think that you’re not capable of achieving what it is that you want to achieve? Do you want to think that? It’s a choice, and you have to decide if you want to attach to and believe those thoughts.

Please don’t skip this step. Don’t think, “It’s obvious. Of course I don’t want to believe that,” and quickly move on. You have to actively and thoroughly look at it and decide you don’t want to believe it.

Step Five: Decide What to Believe About Yourself

Once you know what you’re not going to believe, you need to ask yourself what you want your opinion of yourself to be. What do you want to think about when you think about yourself? What do you want to think about when you think about your dreams? What are you going to choose to focus on? What are you going to choose to tell your mind to think about it? Because each obstacle—each obstacle in your life—is going to be an opportunity to doubt yourself or evolve yourself.

Now, if you don’t have a lot of obstacles in your life, it’s because you’re not dreaming big enough. It’s because you’re probably hiding because you don’t want to have to make that choice between self doubt and evolving.

ENTITLEMENT VS. EFFORT

Now, here’s the thing: Paying attention to your mind—making conscious decisions on what you want to believe and what you want to think—requires effort, and we want to avoid effort. For some
reason, we feel entitled to easy. We feel entitled to someone coming along on a white horse and saving us. We feel entitled to somebody doing it for us. But that doesn’t make us stronger. It doesn’t make us better. It doesn’t help us evolve. The way that we evolve into the best version of ourselves is through effort. You can’t evolve by sitting and watching reruns. That’s not going to happen.

Are you willing to make the effort to pay attention and notice your patterns? Are you willing to notice what the effects of those patterns are? Are you willing to decide if you want to continue to do that or if you want to deliberately think something different? Are you willing to decide what you want your opinion of yourself to be? Ask yourself these questions if you want to evolve into the next best version of yourself. Do you want to continuously do that and grow? I think this is a question that we forget to ask after college. Or maybe a little further after that—maybe after our first three promotions.

**NOTE: DON’T FOCUS ON THE PAST**

So many of the people I talk to, from their early forties all the way into their sixties, have stopped thinking in a growth mindset way. When you talk to younger people, they’re always thinking about their future, right? “I can’t wait until I go to college. I can’t wait until I get married. I can’t wait until I have kids. I can’t wait until I get this promotion. I can’t wait to...” They know that there will be a lot of challenges. They know that there will be a lot of hard work, a lot of growing, and a lot of evolving. But people I talk to in their forties and beyond aren’t thinking in that same way. They’re focused on their past and on what they’ve already done. They’re not focused on the challenges in front of them.

I hear a lot more of, “I don’t have anything to look forward to.” Their opinions of themselves become much more negative and filled with self doubt, whereas the young people that I talk to are much more filled with hope and determination and commitment. We need to regenerate that for ourselves as we get older. We need to think about our unclear futures in terms of whether we want a future created with self doubt. Are we going to have a future that was created with commitment and determination? What got you all the stuff you have in your life that you currently love? What got you there? Was it apathy, or was it commitment, determination, self love, and having a high opinion of yourself? Believe in yourself and your future.

**YOU CAN LEAVE A LEGACY**

When we generate confidence for ourselves, our thinking inspires action. The more action we take and the more we do in the world, the more of a legacy we leave. I think a lot of times when I talk about leaving a legacy, people assume I mean an Oprah-style legacy. But that’s not what I mean.
I think it has to do with your contribution to yourself and your imprint on your life when you look back on it. Will you have done what you wanted to do? Will you have taken the action you wanted to take, or will you have spun out in self doubt? Remember that self doubt creates inaction. If you aren’t doing much in your life right now, what is the reason—the real reason—behind that?

Is it because you’re filled with self doubt? Are you using it as a reason to quit? Because, as you now know, self doubt doesn’t mean that something has gone wrong. It usually means that you’re stretching yourself, that you’re asking more of yourself. Usually, when we try something new, we think, “I’m not sure I can do this.” At that moment, are you going to say, “I’m not even going to try”? When you’ve tried it three times and it hasn’t worked, are you going to then say, “OK, that didn’t work. I’m not going to do it”? Do you understand that self doubt will always invite you to quit—will always invite you to have a low opinion of yourself?

When it happens, will you know that self doubt just means you’re growing? It just means that you get to overcome it on your way to getting exactly what it is you want. It means you’re evolving and growing and asking something of yourself. You’re challenging yourself and bringing up the self doubt—all the stuff that’s holding you back. The bigger your goals, the bigger that self doubt is going to be. That’s a beautiful thing because when it comes up, you can own it and then you can change it. On the other side of every accomplishment, you will have even more confidence. That new confidence can be used as fuel to overcome your next full evolvement, where you’ll once again encounter self doubt.

If you fully believe that you can do something, you already have it. The only thing keeping you from what you want and what you have now is the belief that you can’t have it. The only thing preventing you from that belief is self doubt. It’s always going to be the obstacle out in front of you. The only question is, are you going to get better at overcoming it so that you can go and do even bigger things in your life? Are you going to grow accustomed to giving in, taking no action, and reacting to it, or are you going to grow accustomed to working through it? You’re going to get better at one or the other. There is no other alternative.

I’ve invited you to know that self doubt is something that’s part of your evolution. It’s just part of the process. I’ve invited you to commit to overcoming it. What do you think about when you think about yourself? I want you to think about how amazing you are, and how capable you are. I hope you now truly understand that self doubt doesn’t mean that something is wrong. I hope you know that it means you’re growing and are in the process of becoming the person you’re meant to be. Self doubt doesn’t mean you should turn around and go home. It means you’re on the right path.
PART THREE

Emotional Maturity: What It Is and How to Achieve It
In Parts One and Two, I showed you how to overcome some of the most common and crippling obstacles to success in life: fear, anxiety, the victim mentality, and self doubt. While reading those chapters, if you took the time to work through one of those obstacles, you know it’s not an easy thing to do. Like the members of my Self Coaching Scholars program, you know it takes effort. But also like them, you see the results. You understand the wisdom behind the strategies I’ve given to you.

You now know how and why your thoughts are responsible for negative feelings that hold you back. Maybe you discovered thoughts that you weren’t aware of. I’ve also shown you that your thoughts and reactions are your choices. I’ve given you steps to identify them, to identify your reactions to them, and to change them into positive thoughts and productive reactions that serve you and your goals.

I want you to know about a few other concepts that are key to self coaching. The most important one is the Self Coaching Model. It will literally solve any problem. I use it all the time and view it as a true blessing in my life. It’s helped me and my clients so much. The other concept is emotional adulthood, which is a wonderful byproduct of using the Model.

Yes, the phrase “emotional adulthood” sounds kind of boring, but I promise you that you’ll want it for yourself. In the rest of this third part of the book, I’ll explain healthy thought management and how you can work toward it. Teaching healthy thought management is the cornerstone of what I do, and after you get it, you’ll be ready to try out the self coaching tools in Part Three, which form the basis of my Self Coaching Scholars program.
Taking responsibility for our emotions and feelings helps us maintain control of our happiness and grow as a person. This is emotional adulthood. The concepts of emotional adulthood and emotional childhood developed over time for me as a coach and as a teacher at The Life Coach School. I’ve seen that people who choose emotional adulthood enjoy better relationships, higher productivity, and even better health than those who are unconsciously in emotional childhood.

**EMOTIONAL CHILDHOOD**

We are responsible for how we feel in every moment. We are in charge of how we think, and we are in charge of how we feel. But when we function as emotional children, we blame other people for how we feel, for how we act, and for the results we get in our life. Emotional childhood, sadly, is rampant. Nobody takes us to emotional adulthood college. There’s no class offered in college or in high school that says, “Hey, you’re eighteen. It’s time for you to become an emotional adult.” A teacher could announce to us, “Now that you’re an adult, you have the brain processes to be able to understand what you’re thinking. You can start thinking about your thinking, and therefore, you can decide what to think and what to feel in any given moment, no matter what anyone else does in your life.” Wouldn’t it be great if there was a class like that in school?

As children, we don’t have the capacity to get outside ourselves. In fact, we think that everything that’s going on in our life is what’s causing our feelings, and these thoughts are perpetuated by how we are raised. How many times have you heard from a teacher or from a parent: “Now Sally, you really hurt that little girl’s feelings. You need to say you’re sorry for hurting her feelings” or “When she did that, did that hurt your feelings?” or “You know, when you do that, that’s mean and makes him feel this way.”

This way of thinking is so ingrained, we don’t even realize we teach each other that other people are responsible for how we feel. It’s the most disempowering thing that we can do, not only to our children, but especially to ourselves as adults. Children don’t have the capacity to make that distinction. Additionally, there are so many adults that function emotionally as children, that it’s perpetuated all the way into adulthood. The problem is that it’s so disempowering to keep ourselves in a space of emotional childhood and blame.
When I get home from work, I want a treat, and I am hungry so I “deserve” it, I tell myself. A series of bad decisions ensues: candy, chocolate, sweet fruits, glasses of wine. I’m feeding this toddler inside me, so the actual emotions don’t show up and so I don’t have to deal with the other feelings, like being upset with someone at work, or my lack of planning so everyone can eat a healthy meal. I am making many small changes and want to get through this tug of war I experience.

- LAURA
We blame the government. We blame the economy. We blame our bosses. We blame other people. We blame our ex-husbands. We blame our mothers. We blame our fathers. We blame our childhood. We blame the person that embezzled money from us. We blame everyone for why we feel the way we feel, why we’re doing what we’re doing, and the results we’re getting.

**EMOTIONAL ADULTHOOD**

Emotional adulthood is when we decide to take full responsibility for every single thing we feel, no matter what someone else does or doesn’t do. This is no small feat. It’s a huge challenge for most of us. We go to the place of expecting that we’ll take control of our minds and that we’ll take control of our feelings. Also, as an emotional adult, when we feel a certain way that we don’t want to be feeling, we don’t blame someone else.

Being an emotional adult is amazing. Most of my clients come to me feeling like victims, feeling at the mercy of someone else in their life. For example, they will come to me and they will be trying to raise a child with their ex-husband or their ex-wife, and they will go on and on about how their ex is making them feel frustrated, their ex is making them feel disappointed, their ex is making them feel sad, and more.

What I ask them to do is look at how much power they’re giving this person over their emotional life. I ask, “Of all the people in the world you want to give your power to, do you really want to give it to your ex?” The truth of the matter is that you’re an adult and you are responsible for everything you feel. Your ex’s actions do not determine how you feel. You determine how you feel, and notice when you blame your ex for how you’re feeling, it’s usually a feeling that fuels an action you don’t even want to be taking.

Whereas emotional childhood puts us in a place where we don’t feel like we have control over ourselves as adults (and I know this because I’ve done this a lot), emotional adulthood takes responsibility for how we feel. It gives us the power of choice for how we want to feel, and we end up so much more empowered. We get to be more of what we want to be instead of being in an emotional childhood space by default.

**EXAMPLES OF EMOTIONAL CHILDHOOD**

For me, a lot of my emotional overeating came from a place of blame: blaming my mom for the body that I had, blaming people for having food all around, and blaming myself for not having more control. Really, what was happening was that I wasn’t taking responsibility for my feelings. I wasn’t feeling my feelings; I was eating them instead. I was eating emotional childhood food too. I was eating macaroni and cheese and drive-through kid hamburgers. It was fascinating to see how
much I was taking this emotional childhood to the ultimate level, wanting other people to parent me, take responsibility for me, and take care of me financially.

Many of my clients completely abdicate responsibility, not just for their feelings but for their results and for their life. They let someone else take care of those things. Now, there are many ways to be an emotional adult and still share financial responsibilities and eat fun chicken nugget foods. That’s not what I’m talking about. I’m talking about when you’re in a place of disempowerment—you’re in a place where you feel like you don’t have control over your emotional life—and you give that responsibility to someone else.

Let’s say I give my emotional life over to my husband. It’s like I’m telling him, “You’re responsible for making me happy,” or “You’re responsible for when I’m frustrated and for when I’m sad,” or “You’re responsible for everything that causes an emotion in me.” You can see how, when I’m in that space, I’m going to be constantly trying to control him.

I’m going to be constantly trying to tell him what to do and how to do it. I’m going to be mad when he doesn’t do it, and my emotions are going to be all over the place because I’m trying to control his actions. He’s the pawn in my emotional chessboard. Whatever he does is going to determine how I feel.

That’s a very disempowered place to be, and it’s maddening because you can’t control other people all the time. I’ve noticed that they don’t like it when you try. That’s the truth, and when I learned this concept, I noticed that there is unfortunately a lot of psychology talk in relationships about meeting each other’s needs. I think that’s the ultimate in emotional childhood.

If I go to my husband and I say, “Here are my needs, and you have to meet them,” it’s almost as if I’m a dependent child, right? My needs are that you do this, this, this, and this in order for me to be happy. If he in turn tells me what he needs me to do to make him happy, then we have put each other’s happiness in each other’s hands. That’s not a good place for it to be. Most people can’t even make themselves happy, let alone try to make someone else happy.

Most people don’t want to spend all of their time and energy trying to make you happy because they’re trying to manage their own emotional life. Delegating that responsibility to even someone that you love can affect the relationship in a painful way. I like to say the best relationships are when two people come together and say, “I’m going to meet my needs, you meet your needs, and then we can just come together and have a really good time. My expectations of you are not to manage my emotional life because I’m having a hard time doing that myself. I don’t know how I could expect you to do it.”
WHAT EMOTIONAL ADULTHOOD LOOKS LIKE

Emotional adulthood is “I am responsible for my happiness” and “I’m responsible for my unhappiness.” It’s “I’m responsible when my feelings get hurt” and “I’m responsible for my thoughts, my feelings, and my actions.” Now, people say to me all the time: “Well, if you’re only responsible for how you feel, then have you lost responsibility for how you treat other people?”

I say the opposite is true. When you’re acting from a place of emotional adulthood, you don’t act in a way that’s mean to other people. You don’t act in a way that’s cruel or base your reactions on trying to get them to behave in a certain way so you can feel better. Usually when we throw temper tantrums, when we yell at people, and when we’re mean to people, it’s because we’re trying to control them. We’re trying to get them to behave in a way that will make us feel better, and that’s never going to work. It’s only going to cause tension and pain in the relationship.

Emotional adulthood is “Listen, you get to behave however you want, and I get to behave however I want, and I am responsible for all of my actions, and I am responsible for all of my feelings.” Now, this doesn’t mean that you’re not going to take actions that you sometimes regret. It doesn’t mean you don’t apologize, and it doesn’t mean you don’t take responsibility for how you treat another person.

People who are functioning as emotional adults and taking responsibility for their feelings tend to apologize a lot more because they own up to how they are acting. They don’t say, “The reason I acted that way is because you were like this.” That’s the opposite of taking responsibility for how you think, feel, and behave.

When you’re learning this process of becoming an emotional adult, realize that the point of it isn’t to start blaming yourself for any thoughts or feelings or actions that you’re not liking. If I’m abdicating responsibility and constantly blaming someone else for how I feel, my tendency may be to then turn that blame on myself. My tendency may be to go “My God, so this whole time I’ve been the one. I’m such a horrible person.” That’s not the intention of this process. The intention of the process is to say, “If I feel this way, it’s because of the way I’m thinking. If I’m acting this way, it’s because of the way I’m thinking.” I can be curious and fascinated about that, and I can treat myself with kindness and compassion instead of beating myself up for it, because now I know that I can change.

When we’re functioning from emotional childhood, we usually take action that we end up regretting. Then we feel so badly about it that we don’t take responsibility for it. Emotional adulthood involves taking responsibility for how we feel, so that our chances of showing up in a way we don’t want to show up are greatly reduced. But when we do make mistakes, we own them
I find that I blame my husband... Today I texted him with a simple question. His response was raging about five different things and insinuating a lot of negative label towards me... Instead of defending myself in return, I sent a simple “active listening” statement: “I hear you think I’m inconsiderate, disrespectful of your time, lacking grace, and rude. Those things are all true.” I have never felt so good in a long, long time. His next text literally jumped to being about something completely different.

- REBECCA
completely and we say, “Hey, I just want to let you know that’s on me. I did that. That outburst I had was totally because I was lost in my own brain,” or “The reason I lied to you about that is because I wasn’t taking responsibility and I was trying to hide,” or “The reason I took that stuff from you and didn’t tell you about it is because I was full-on not taking responsibility for myself, but I am taking responsibility now.”

That’s a powerful, wonderful place to reside—in a place where you have complete power over your life. I think the phrase “emotional adulthood” sounds like something that won’t be fun and exciting compared to “emotional childhood,” but it isn’t true. Being dependent on anyone else when you don’t need to be, as an adult, isn’t fun. It’s disempowering.

**HOW EMOTIONAL CHILDHOOD AFFECTED MY WEIGHT**

Let me give you another example of how emotional childhood affected my life. When I was first trying to lose weight, and I was very angry that I couldn’t lose weight, I was an emotional eater. I used to sign up for diet plans. I signed up for all of them, so just imagine any of them. Then I would become a complete emotional child. I would make the diet like my parent. I would be the child, and I would get frustrated and rebel against the diet. I would think, “You can’t tell me what to do,” “I’m not going to eat that,” and “I did everything you said, and I still gained weight. That’s your fault.”

I would go into this place where I was the child and the diet was the adult. I was figuratively banging my head against the wall and trying to rebel against the very thing I wanted. Then I’d go into this place where “I want cookies, and fries, and candy!” It’s like a little toddler in the grocery store tugging on their mom’s dress, “I want it, I want it, I want it, I want it.”

That’s what I would do with food. I would go into this place where “It’s not fair, and I want to eat that too, and I’m going to eat it.” I was in a place of blame and not taking responsibility. I was feeling sorry for myself. I wanted the diet to take care of me and make me happy and be responsible for what I ate. But when I’d sign up and the adult (the diet) said to me, “OK. Eat this and take responsibility for it,” I’d completely rebel against it.

When I gave up on the diet, I’d blame the diet for my lack of success. That’s an ultimate example of emotional childhood. I wasn’t taking full responsibility for the fact that I wasn’t following the diet, I wasn’t paying attention to my body and what it needed, and I wasn’t exercising. I was just feeling sorry for myself and acting like an emotional child.
FIND YOUR EMOTIONAL CHILD

Now that we’ve gotten a good look at the concept of emotional adulthood versus emotional childhood, I encourage you to explore this in your life. Write down some examples of yourself acting like an emotional child. Where are you placing blame in your life? Where are you not taking responsibility?

Also ask yourself: “Where do you feel entitled to something you haven’t earned?” That’s a powerful question for me—the sense of “I deserve this thing even though I haven’t done anything to work toward it.” That’s the sense of entitlement that takes the place of myself not taking responsibility for the actions that I’m taking in the world.

Yes, being an emotional adult requires more effort. It requires more responsibility. But emotional adults know that it’s worth it. It’s worth it to take that step into managing ourselves and our minds, so we aren’t dependent on other people for how we think, feel, and act, and ultimately for the results we get in our lives. Try it out. Look at where you are being an emotional child, how you can take more responsibility, and how you can stop placing blame. Consider what would happen if you did those things and ultimately how that would change the results you’re getting in your life.
Emotional adulthood is a byproduct of managing our thinking, so now let’s focus on exactly how to do that. A lot of us don’t realize that many of our thoughts aren’t serving us. We think it’s the circumstances of our lives that create our experiences in the world. But really, as I mentioned previously, our thinking about our lives is responsible for how we experience the world.

Managing our minds and deciding what we want to think about is the secret to a happy life, period. If we constantly think positive, wonderful things that we truly believe about ourselves, we feel much happier than if we think negative thoughts about ourselves or other people.

Are we making good choices about how we want to think? What does it look like to manage our thoughts in a healthy, productive way that nourishes and supports our goals in life? What does unhealthy thought management look like? What kinds of thinking are typical of people who practice healthy thought management? How can you work toward it if you’re not there? That’s what we’ll explore here.

HEALTHY THOUGHT MANAGEMENT MEANS BEING MINDFUL OF ONE’S MIND

It’s important to review and to understand that there are things in the world that happen that we have no control over. Other people, our past, things that have happened to us... we have no control over those things. But we do have control over how we think about those things and what we make those things mean.
As I have practiced my daily thought, it has become so much easier to see the “negative” thoughts that felt like facts become more like true sentences in my mind that I just don’t want to choose anymore. Instead, thinking new thoughts to support this new thought/belief feels better. It took a solid commitment, but I can see how this process works! So much less arguing in my brain to not support the new thought I want feels great.

- SELF COACHING SCHOLARS STUDENT
A lot of times people will say, “But I don’t feel like I have control over my thinking.” The reason why people don’t feel like they have control over their thinking is because they aren’t aware of what they’re thinking. If we want to manage our thoughts, we need to become aware of how we’re thinking.

I’m not talking about just becoming more mindful of our lives. I’m talking about becoming more mindful of our minds—thinking about what’s going on in our minds, thinking about why we think what we think, and whether we want to continue to think the way that we’re thinking. Yes, these are deep questions, but once you start watching your mind—once you start eavesdropping on it—you realize that you aren’t your brain. You’re the person watching your brain.

A lot of times, your brain is programmed inadvertently—without your consciousness and deliberateness. You haven’t been telling your mind what to do, so your mind is busy telling you what to do. You’re obeying it because it’s your mind. When you can start recognizing that the reason you act this way is because of what you’re thinking, that can change everything for you. That awareness in and of itself can help with the process of change.

What happens when people start to become aware of their thinking? Someone just commented to me about this. They said, “I’m aware of what I’m thinking, but what I’m realizing is that I’m only thinking about how I’m not worth anything, and I’m thinking about how I’m no good and I’m not useful.” It’s powerful to know that you’re thinking that, but you don’t want to stop there. Once you become aware of all your negative thinking, you don’t want to go, “OK, now I’m a more mindful person,” and stop there.

I remember doing this work myself. I started thinking, “I’m feeling my feelings, and I’m aware of my thinking, but all I’m aware of are my negative feelings and thoughts. Now what?” There was always a missing piece for me. My question became, “What do I do with all of this?”

The answer is that once you become aware of your thinking patterns, your feeling patterns, and how you’re reacting to them, you have the opportunity to catch yourself before you react. When you recognize that something is just a thought/feeling combination and not something you have to react to, that’s when you can start changing those behavioral patterns.

If you don’t tell your brain what to focus on or what to think about, it will go to the old patterns. The brain likes to do what it’s good at. What it’s good at is stuff that it’s done a lot. Unfortunately, for many of us, that’s a lot of very negative anxiety- and frustration-producing thinking. Let’s look at how we can get our brains to work for us instead of against us.
CHOOSING TO MANAGE THOUGHTS DOESN’T MEAN AVOIDING THEM

Healthy thought management means choosing thoughts. I taught the concept of choosing one’s thoughts to one of my students, and she asked a fantastic question. What she said was: “You’ve told us that if we think a certain way, we’re going to get negative results. Shouldn’t we resist thinking that way?” Then she said, “But you’ve also told us not to resist our feelings and to feel them, so I feel like this is kind of contradictory.”

It’s a good question. Let me clarify. What I teach is to allow everything. Allow your thoughts, and allow your feelings. Once you allow them, that’s when you can increase your awareness of them so that you can decide how you’re going to react to them. You don’t want to resist your thoughts and feelings. If you resist them, you block them out of your consciousness, but that doesn’t mean you stop thinking or feeling them. You’d most likely still be reacting to them because they’re still present, albeit subconsciously.

That’s why so many of us feel so out of control all the time. We feel like we don’t know why we do what we do. We think, “I don’t want to eat that much food,” “I don’t want to yell at my kids,” “I don’t want to yell at my husband,” “I don’t want to watch all of this TV,” or “I don’t want to be surfing the internet for hours and hours,” but we just can’t seem to control it. The reason we’re unable to control our reactions is because we’re unaware of the thoughts and feelings that drive them. Once we become aware, it becomes much easier to notice the thought or feeling before the reaction happens and to make a deliberate choice. The choice can happen at the thought level, when you start directing your mind and telling it what to think.

My students will sometimes say this to me: “Once I know that I’m having a lot of negative thinking, you tell me that I can direct my mind to become more positive. But what I want to do is forget about all that negative thinking and just focus on the positive thinking.” But it can’t be done that way. If there’s any emotion, it must be allowed. Because when you allow it, then you’re not going to be so freaked out by the related negative thoughts and words when they appear in your brain. And they will appear, because that’s what you’ve trained your brain to do by living your life, and that’s OK. You’re not supposed to live your whole life with positive emotion. Negative emotions are part of the human experience, and it’s necessary to allow them and to feel them.

If you feel sad about something, that’s a choice a lot of the time. You want to feel sad about something. Sometimes you feel upset about something, or you feel frustrated. Sometimes those are the ways that you want to feel. Allowing yourself to feel the way you want to feel is a huge piece of it.
The other piece of it is just noticing. When you feel negative emotion, you don’t have to resist, avoid, or react to it. You can just simply feel it. Feel some resistance. Feel some anxiety. Feel some frustration. If you are willing to feel those emotions, you’ll stop reacting to them. If you stop reacting to them, you’ll stop perpetuating them, and you’re on the way to better thought management.

When you allow yourself to feel the negative emotion, then you can access the thought that’s causing it. Now, most people make the mistake at this point that they start wanting to get rid of it—to get rid of such negative thinking. They think, “I can’t believe I’m thinking I have such low self-esteem. I can’t believe I’m thinking I’m such a terrible person.” When you resist that, you can’t understand it. I like to understand and allow everything, because then I can own it and release it.

TRANSITIONING FROM NEGATIVE TO NEUTRAL THOUGHTS

Everyone has negative thoughts sometimes. If you notice that you have a lot of thoughts about yourself like “I’m no good,” “I’m never going to amount to anything,” “I’m never going to be able to lose weight,” “I’m not as talented as those people,” “I’m not as beautiful as those people,” “I’m not as thin as those people,” or whatever it is that comes up for you, you can greet that thought with compassion. Welcome it. Notice that it’s what you’re thinking. Ask yourself why you’re choosing to think that, and acknowledge that it’s something you’re choosing to think. Be compassionate with yourself about it. Just that in and of itself makes it so much easier to release it, because as long as you’re pushing it away from you, it’s hard to hold it in the palm of your hand.

I like to think about these thoughts that I have, especially the negative ones, as sentences that I can put in the palm of my hand and observe. At that point I can ask, “Is this something I want to continue to think, or not?” Then I can start focusing on what I want to think.
This is not pretending to think positive thoughts. This is not thinking, “I wish I believed that I was beautiful, so I’m just going to go around saying, I’m beautiful, I’m beautiful, I’m beautiful, I’m beautiful, I’m beautiful.” Here’s what you have to remember about all replacement thoughts and all focused thinking: You can’t convince yourself of it. It has to be believable, and it has to feel good.

One of the things that’s important to do is to move up the scale of thinking toward better thought management. If you’re thinking of yourself as “I’m no good,” don’t try to go to “I’m the best person in the whole wide world! It’s all rainbows and daisies and sparkles around me!” Don’t try to do that.

Go from “I’m no good. I’m not worth anything” to “I am a human being.” Can you see how it’s a more neutral thought? It takes away some of the negative connotation, and it shifts you into a different feeling without trying to pretend anything.

I tell a lot of my weight loss coaching clients to go from “I have a fat body” to just “I have a body,” to just go to the place where they recognize that they have a body. That neutral statement is much better than “I have an ugly, fat body.” “I have a body”: That’s a thought that you can focus your brain on. “I have a body. I have a body. I have a body.” When the negative thought comes up, direct it to “I have a body.”

I also tell my weight loss clients that before they start trying to change their thinking, it’s important to notice how they feel and what they do when they think, “I have a fat body.” Ironically, most of us eat when we think that way. That’s just a good pattern to understand and be compassionate and nonjudgmental about. When you think, “I have no self-worth” or “I’m not worth anything,” how do you feel when you think that way, and then what do you do?

Then, when you catch yourself thinking that, you can switch to, “I was created by something bigger than myself. I am here. I am matter.” A lot of people can’t get to the place where they believe that they do matter, but they can get to the place where they know they have matter. They exist. Just making that shift from a negative to a neutral thought can be huge. It’s an important part of the process of moving toward healthy thought management.

**IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT THOUGHT MANAGEMENT**

Before moving forward with thought management and on how exactly to implement positive thoughts, I want to bring up a few important points about the process of working toward healthy thought management, including some obstacles you might encounter.
Both my husband and I suffered because of our thinking about our childhoods. Today, I have been thinking about hope. With a little cognitive elbow grease, I can create new thoughts that will give us happier feelings and unblock our future.

- LINDA

**Thought Management Requires Accepting Your Emotions**

I want to stress that making that shift to neutral, and eventually positive, thought management is not about thinking “Oh my God. There’s always negative thoughts. I’m going to push, push, push against them so I can only think positive, happy thoughts.” That’s not it. We make a point to notice the negative thoughts. We don’t dwell on them, and we’re not afraid of them because all they can do is cause negative emotion, and there’s no emotion that we’re not willing to feel. No big deal, right?

Here’s what it looks like in terms of what you say to yourself: “I’ll feel any negative emotion. If my boss yells at me, I have a thought he shouldn’t yell at me. I feel frustrated. I’m willing to feel all of that. I’m willing to notice it, but I don’t have to continue thinking that way. I can notice that’s also a choice. Next time he yells at me, I can choose to think something different, but I may not. If I don’t, it’s OK because there is no emotion that I’m not willing to feel.”

**Thought Management Doesn’t Stop at Just Feeling Emotions**

Realize that there’s a difference between being willing to feel an emotion and being willing to react to that emotion. You don’t have to choose to react to it by resisting or avoiding it. When we react to ourselves or avoid ourselves, that’s when we go into these compulsive behaviors, and that’s when we start acting in ways that we don’t want to act.

**Thought Management Requires Separating Yourself from Your Thoughts**

The problem for most of us is that we believe that we are our thoughts. We believe that what we think is true about ourselves, and we believe that what we think is who we are. If we think a bunch of negative thoughts about ourselves, then we believe that we are negative people. But the truth is that those are just thoughts. They aren’t who we are. Those are just thoughts that we decide to think unconsciously, and we can decide to think something different.
Observing Your Thoughts Doesn’t Mean Digging Into Your Past

If you try to approach this process with resistance and with anger, you’re going to get into trouble, because then you’re going to start adding negative thoughts on top of negative thoughts. You’re going to beat yourself up for having the negative thoughts, and then you’re going to try to push away the negative thoughts. Then you’re going to pretend like you don’t have the negative thoughts.

What you need to do is step back and say, “That’s a thought. That’s interesting. That’s fascinating. Why would I choose to think that I don’t have any self worth?” Now, I’m not suggesting that you go back into your past and find some deep, dark reason. I’m just asking that you ask yourself the following questions:

- **Why would I choose to think that now?**
- **If I’m conscious of that thought and I notice that it’s there, is that a thought I want to keep thinking? Why or why not?**
- **When I notice the thought, can I greet it with compassion and notice what it’s causing me to feel, without resistance?**
- **Can I stop reacting to whatever that feeling is because I’m willing to feel any emotion.**
- **Can I change what my brain is focusing on?**

**TRANSITIONING TO POSITIVE THOUGHT MANAGEMENT**

**Focusing on Creativity Helps**

Two of the most important tools we use at The Life Coach School are asking questions and setting goals. Those are the two best ways I know of to direct your brain. There’s this idea that I got from Deepak Chopra that is fascinating to me. What he suggests is that our imagination can be used for either anxiety or creativity. We’re either worrying about something and creating anxiety for ourselves or we’re focusing on creating something. I love that concept.

If you direct your mind in a way so that it’s thinking about creation, such as a goal you want to create or a future you want to have, you’re using your imagination. You’re putting your brain to work to do what you wanted to do. How cool is it to think about your brain as an employee, as a tool, and as something that’s been given to you to utilize? If we don’t manage it, we don’t tell it what to do, so it just tries to get good at whatever it keeps repeating for itself instead of what it’s being told to repeat.
Focus on a Goal Each Day

Direct your mind as if it’s working for you. This is how I want you to manage your brain. This is what I want you to think. This is what I want you to do. Your brain is an amazing tool. One of the best ways to manage it is to have a really exciting goal that you think about every day. Look at the goal every day, and tell your brain, “That’s what I want you to focus on.” Maybe you’ve read Napoleon Hill’s *Think and Grow Rich*. He talks about this in detail. He talks about how the brain needs to be thinking about what it wants, and it needs to repeat and repeat and repeat and repeat, and then it will go about the business of doing.

Ask Amazing Questions

The second thing you can do is to ask yourself amazingly good questions. Ask yourself awesome questions, like these:

- *How can I feel great today?*
- *How can I help the world today?*
- *How can I contribute today?*
- *What can I do to have a good day?*
- *What can I think today that will create a lot of positive emotion?*

When you ask your brain questions like these, it can’t help but find an answer. That is what the brain is trained to do. It loves to answer questions.

Avoid Negative Questions

If you ask it a poor question, your mind’s going to give you a lot of negative thinking. “Why am I so tired? Why am I so stupid? Why don’t I have any self worth?” If you ask yourself those questions, it will give you answers. It will give you thoughts to think. If you ask it positive questions, it will give you thoughts to think that are positive, right? “Why am I so lucky?” “Why did this world treat me with such amazing bounty?” You can come up with all of these answers.
“What do I have to be thankful for?” “What do I love right now?” “What makes me so happy right now?” Those are questions that are going to get your brain focused, right? They’re going to tell your brain what to do, and they’re going to come up with a lot more positive thinking for you.

**Program Your Brain with Reminders**

Once you’ve come up with some thoughts that you really do believe in, then you need to practice. I suggest you put the thoughts on stickies, put them on three-by-five cards, write them on your binders, and write them on your computer. Remind yourself what you want your brain to be thinking. You need to feed it what you want it to do. It’s just like a computer.

Your brain doesn’t care if it thinks negative thoughts or positive thoughts. It’s just a thinker. It just does what it’s told. If it’s been told negative things for years, that’s what it knows how to do well. If it’s been told positive things for years, that’s what it knows how to do. The awesome part about it is that you can decide to change that. If you want to think different thoughts, you’re the one that can program it.

**IN SUMMARY**

To practice thought management, first figure out what you’re thinking. Really become aware of it. Then be willing to allow any feeling. Don’t be afraid to feel any feeling. The worst thing that can happen is that you have a vibration in your body. That’s all a feeling is. You’re willing to feel anything. You won’t be afraid of your thinking, and you’ll be willing to look at it. Next, stop reacting to those feelings. Just be aware of them. Then you can decide to start changing how you feel by changing how you think. You can replace those negative thoughts with neutral ones, and eventually with positive ones. You’ll create what you want your mind to do and ultimately deliver to you in your life.
Part of why I love my job as a life coach so much is because I’m able to help people solve just about any of their problems. I get to see great results. There’s almost nothing that a client can come to me with that I can’t help them with.

When I work with clients, I start by helping them solve the most pressing problems in their lives. I demonstrate how powerful self coaching is by taking each problem they have one by one and showing them ways to think, feel, and act on each one. Once they’ve experienced the results and power of this work, then I teach them the Model so they can independently use it to coach themselves. I’ve set up this last part in the same way. Let’s begin.
CHAPTER 7

How to Solve Any Problem

What most people think are problems aren’t usually problems at all. What I’ve found through years of working with clients is that almost all of our problems are due to our thinking. Self coaching teaches the process for accessing creativity and wisdom within yourself in order to solve any problem. By understanding and applying the concepts I’m teaching in this book, you can literally find a solution to any problem.

I have broken problem solving into six steps. You don’t always need all six. If you start with step one you might have it solved by step three. Understanding all six gives you a formula to tackle any issue.

**STEP ONE: IDENTIFY A PROBLEM**

We have a process that we do at The Life Coach School with all of our students. It’s called “separating out the facts.” What you do is you take any issue in your life and you separate the facts from the thoughts.

Facts have to be provable in the court of law. They have to be something that everyone would agree on. Saying something like, “My best friend is mean,” may or may not describe a fact, because someone may disagree. Not everyone agrees. It’s not a fact that can be proven.

If your friend didn’t invite you to her birthday party, you could say, “My best friend didn’t invite me to her birthday party.” That is a fact. The statement, “My best friend is mean,” is a thought. The fact that she didn’t invite you to her birthday party is not a problem at all for anyone until you have a thought about it.

Your thinking about it is what creates the problem. What I love about knowing this is that you decide. You have control over what is a problem to you and what isn’t. If you make it mean something like “She’s mean, she doesn’t love me, she doesn’t care about me, she’s not my best friend anymore,” those thoughts are all creating the problem.

I can hear some of you listening to me or rolling your eyes and saying, “Wow, that’s a stretch.” It’s not. You get to see that you have the power to interpret anything any way you want.
Let’s say that she didn’t invite you on purpose because she wanted to be mean to you. That was her intention. That still isn’t a problem until you have a thought about it that makes it a problem. And you don’t have to make it a problem. What this does is it gives you all of your emotional responsibility back. If you’re upset about something, it’s because of the way you’re thinking about it. It’s because of what you’re making it mean.

Anyone can do whatever they want to you, and you get to decide how you want to feel about it. It’s a choice. It’s not a problem until you start thinking about it. The way you think about it is what creates a problem.

Let’s think of another example. Let’s say you’re ten pounds overweight according to a chart on some company’s website. Is that a problem? I don’t know. It depends on the way you’re thinking about it. If you think, “That chart is ridiculous. I feel great in my body. I don’t feel overweight. I’m very healthy. It’s not a problem for me that the scale says that I’m ten pounds overweight,” then it’s not a problem for you. Someone else might see the same chart and they might have thoughts like, “Oh my gosh, I’m overweight. I have no control. I can’t lose weight. I have problems. I’m unhealthy.” They choose to think about it that way, and then all of a sudden they have a problem. It’s the same exact circumstance, with the same exact facts, but the choice of how to think about it is what determines whether or not it’s a problem.

So, the first thing you need to do is think about any problem you have. This can be a problem that’s so severe and intense that you can barely think about it without having an anxiety attack, or it can just be some pesky, minor problem that you’re having in your life. Pick any one you want, but just pick one problem. Hold it in your mind’s eye and think about it.

**Identify How You Think About the Problem**

As you’re likely beginning to realize, it’s never really the problem that’s the problem. It’s how you think about the problem. I can’t tell you how true that is. Problems aren’t problems until we think about them and make them problems. A problem for one person isn’t a problem for someone else.

The easiest way to understand this is to separate out the facts of the problem from your thoughts about it. Facts are always neutral. What you make them mean is what creates a problem. For example, if you get fired from your job you might make it mean you’re a failure. Then you have a big problem. You might take it further to mean you’ll be broke and a bag lady. Then you have an even bigger problem. But you could also make it mean you have a great opportunity. The fact, “I got fired,” stays the same but the thinking determines the extent of the “problem.”

One of my coaches sent me an email. She explained that she’s become very successful in her business and gotten much better at marketing and sales. She said she’s making quite a bit of
I am an amateur boxer, and I find this an indispensable tool when working on my “mental game,” which my coach is always telling me to do, and which I realized recently is really my biggest problem. My own feelings of unworthiness or inadequacy being driven by my own thoughts—which I can control—completely blew my mind. I feel so much stronger, self fulfilled, and confident already.

— ANNA

money, and that she and her husband talk about their problems as “rich people problems.” I laughed hysterically because she was saying how a rich person problem is like, “Oh no! I’m late for my nail appointment,” or “Oh my gosh! We have a rip in our hot tub cover.” Are these really problems? Well, these are rich people problems, and I liked how this coach was able to recognize that and put things into perspective. We should all do this with our problems. Maybe we’re not rich, but we should put our problems in perspective. I’ve thought about that so many times since receiving that email when I’m stressed out over something that’s not a real issue.

Calling it a “rich person problem” puts it right in perspective. The air conditioner isn’t working, and my house is dirty: These are not life-altering issues. When you can put them in perspective like that, it’s really helpful.

Identify What You Focus On

The other thing that you have to remember when it comes to problems is not just how you’re thinking about them but also what you’re focused on. Most of the time when we have a problem, we keep focusing on the problem, talking about the problem, or calling friends about the problem. Then we talk to ourselves about it again and even find ourselves waking up in the middle of the night, thinking about it.

We spend so much effort on thinking about the problem, but we aren’t focused on thinking about the solution to the problem. Something in my business that’s important to me is to redirect things when someone makes a mistake or when something falls apart in our business. When something goes wrong, I like to focus on the solution instead of spending a lot of time explaining the problem, talking about the problem, or even making excuses about the problem.

I just like to say, “This happens. This is a problem. How do we solve it? Let’s focus on moving forward.” That said, my husband, Chris, whom I work with, would disagree. He’d say that I like to
talk about the problem too much. He’s actually one of the people who have taught me to focus on the solution, and to say, “OK, that happened. How do we make sure it doesn’t happen again?” I admire him for that because I agree. I think understanding why a problem happened can definitely help with the solution, but the main focus should be on the solution.

In summary, remember these two tips when you’re identifying the problem:

1. Think about the facts. Notice the way you’re thinking about them. Is it helpful or is it not helping?
2. Ask yourself if you’re focused on the problem or if you’ve put your mind to work on the solution.

Those two tips right there can be seriously life changing, so make sure to consider them as you identify the problem you want to work on.

**STEP TWO: ASK YOURSELF WHY IT’S A PROBLEM**

Let’s use an example to show that you can actually make something into a much bigger problem or a much smaller problem depending on how you think about it. I am not, in any way, suggesting that you shouldn’t think about anything as a problem. I just want you to recognize that it’s your thinking that’s making it a problem.

Let’s say that a child of yours—pretend with me if you don’t have children—takes a five-dollar bill out of your purse. A parent may say to themselves, “I need to talk to my child and make sure that they know that they shouldn’t take money out of my purse.” Or, if the child already knows that, the parent may say, “I’m going to have a little talk with them, and we’re going to make sure that doesn’t happen again.” But another parent might say, “Oh my gosh! My child is a thief, and this is a problem, and I need to put him in therapy.” Or, “This is a reflection on me as a parent. I’m a terrible parent.”

Can you see how the way you think about it creates a certain level of problem in your world based on how you think about it? I’m not saying one’s better than the other at all. I’m saying that you’re the one that decides what kinds of problems you have.

The main issue I see is that most people don’t own that they’re the creator of their problems. They think problems are outside of themselves. There’s a problem with that—a problem with that problem. The problem with that is you lose control over solving the problem. If you don’t understand that you’re the creator of it, it’s very difficult for you to feel like you can solve it. But when you recognize that you’re the one creating it and you can find peace with that knowing, solving it gives you access to your creativity and to your wisdom.

One of the things that I like to ask a lot of my clients might make you laugh. This will give you an indication of my personality as a coach. The question I like to ask is, “So what?” I know it doesn’t
seem to be very compassionate or empathetic, but it is. Someone will come and have this whole story: “Oh my gosh, can you believe that this happened to me and this happened to me and this happened to me.” I will say, “So what?” It stops us right in our tracks. My client replies, “What do you mean, ‘so what’? ‘So what’ that this happened? Don’t you care that this happened?” I clarify that I want to know why it matters. I want to know what the client is making it mean to them.

It’s a powerful question. I want you to think about it too. I want you to think about the problem that you brought up to your mind’s eye, and think about the answer to the question, “So what?” How you answer that question tells you your problem. How you answer that question reveals your thinking about the problem. The problem needs to be separated out. When you ask yourself, “So what?” that will separate the thoughts out. If you want to know exactly what you’re making the problem about, then you write down only the facts of the problem.

**Figure Out What You Really Want**

The second part of this process of asking yourself what the problem is, is to figure out what you really want. Most of us don’t think about it. We focus on what’s wrong, but we don’t focus on what we want. When you think about you as being the one that gets to decide what you want, then you can look at your thinking about your problems and decide whether that’s how you want to be thinking about your problem. You can decide if you want it to be that way.

If the answer’s yes, then you don’t need to change anything. But if it’s not what you want, you know that you have a choice to make. One of the great questions to ask yourself is, “How do I want to feel about this?”

When your child takes five dollars out of your purse, how do you want to feel about it? Do you want to be enraged? Do you want to be vindictive? Do you want to be angry or do you want to be understanding? Do you want to be curious? Do you want to be open? Do you want to be allowing? There’s no right answer there. There’s only the answer that you get to choose.

Some of us will get enraged if our child steals, but we won’t want to be enraged. We feel like that’s just the gut reaction—that we don’t have a choice there. When we think about all of our “problems” in life, we can ask ourselves: “How do I want to feel?” and “Why am I not feeling that way?”

The reason why you’re not feeling the way you may want to feel is because of what you’re thinking. Ask yourself: “How would I need to think about this problem? How do I want to change the way I’m thinking about this problem so I can be in a different emotional state?”

For me, when I think about my problems, I like to be in a place of creativity and wisdom. Whenever I’m dealing with a problem, I want to access the part of me that feels creative, that feels wise,
peaceful, and calm. When I access that emotional space within me, I’m able to solve problems like a champ. I’m able to come up with ways of approaching them, ways of thinking of them, and solutions to them in a much more effective way than when I’m enraged, frustrated, or ridden with anxiety.

When you think about your problem, think about how you’re feeling. Recognize that the reason you’re feeling the way you’re feeling about your problem is because of how you’re thinking about it. Problems aren’t problems until we think about them. Thoughts about problems are choices.

Even as I’m writing this, it’s blowing my mind because it’s the most powerful place to be. Even if you don’t fully believe me yet, take a little nuisance problem. For example, say that you’re in the house and there’s a fly buzzing around—it’s just going “bzzz-bzzz-bzzz-bzzz-bzzz.” There have been times when I’m just like, “There’s a little fly. It’s just chilling in the house. It doesn’t bother me. It’s not a problem.” There are other times, like if I’m really trying to focus or it’s extra hot in the house, and that fly is buzzing around, that I’m like, “I can’t get anything done. This fly is so annoying. This is so hard. I can’t do this. I need everyone to be quiet!”

I get myself into this thinking pattern that makes something into much more of a problem than it ever needed to be. It’s not the fly that’s the problem. It’s the way I think about the fly that’s the problem.

Knowing that gives you everything back. You’ve seen this. Certain people are nonreactive when it comes to certain things, and you wonder, “How do they do that? How do they just chill in the face of that?” It’s because of the way they think. That’s something everyone should learn. We should all be taught that how we think about things will determine how we act and, ultimately, our result.

**STEP THREE: EVALUATE YOUR REACTION**

The third part of the process is to evaluate what you’re doing when it comes to your problem. Are you reacting? Are you feeling out of control? Are you avoiding and not dealing with what’s coming up? Are you paying attention to your thinking? Are you paying attention to your feelings, or are you just pretending your problem away? Are you blowing up at people and yelling at people? Are you walking around with intense anxiety all the time? What are you doing when it comes to your problem?

Remember, all of your actions are coming from your thoughts and feelings. Paying attention to why you’re doing what you’re doing will reveal your thoughts and your feelings to you. Your thoughts and feelings are the most important part of every problem because they reveal your thinking.
When you think about a problem a certain way, you’re going to feel a certain way, and you’re going to act a certain way. For example, when I’m thinking about the fly and my thought is, “That’s the most annoying thing in the whole world,” then I feel annoyed. My action is to stop what I’m doing and to chase the fly around the house, to yell at it, be angry at it, and to try and kill it. That’s going to give me one kind of reaction. If I’m trying to get something done, that reaction is not serving me. It has me focused on the fly and then the fly is the most annoying thing because it’s the only thing I’m focused on.

If I’m working on something, and a fly is flying around, and I realize this fly has no effect on me until I focus my energy on it—until I look at it, until I turn away from my work and start focusing on it—then I can stay in a more peaceful, productive state and keep working. One fly in my house has no effect on me until I allow it to—until I give it that power and I start focusing on it.

Now think about your problem again. What are you doing in relation to your problem when you feel annoyed, curious, or focused? How do you react? How do you want to react? By looking at your actions, you can see how your thoughts and feelings are affecting you.

A lot of people, when I teach them this concept, love it. They think it’s totally fascinating and they want to learn more about it, and they want to keep talking about it. But it’s only powerful to the point that you’re applying yourself to it. Don’t just entertain yourself with it. Actually apply it to your own problem. When you think about your problem, what is your thought about your problem? What are you feeling when you think that thought, and then what do you do?

Is what you’re doing serving you and solving the problem from that negative space? Is there a way you could think and feel and do something with that problem that wouldn’t be causing you to react from a negative space or to avoid from a negative space?

What I’ve found is that the answer is usually a resounding “Yes!” We can change the way we’re thinking. If we’re aware enough to find it, then we can change the way we’re thinking. When we change the way we’re thinking, we solve the problem immediately because what happens is it no longer is a level of problem that we’ve created it to be. It’s now just something that we’re working on. It’s not a problem anymore. It’s helping us find a solution.

**STEP FOUR: DO THE “MANUAL WORK”**

The fourth part of the process is what I call “Manual Work,” and it deals with people and our expectations of them. People can seem like problems to us because we’ve created “manuals” for them of how we want them to behave. We’ve tied our emotional life to whether or not they follow
the manual, and we don’t even realize that we’re doing this. We think that we have reasonable expectations of people in our life and that they should behave in a way that is reasonable. But what we think is reasonable and what other people think is reasonable is often very different. One of the first things that is important to remember is that adults have the ability and freedom to behave however they would like. That includes you.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the challenges with some of modern therapy is that therapists will sit down—and this has happened with some of my clients—and say, “What are your needs? Let’s make a list of what all of your needs are and then you need to tell those needs to this other person. Then, that person can try and meet your needs.” That sets up a manual that’s destined for disaster.

We’re responsible for meeting our own needs. If you’re in a relationship with someone who expects you to fulfill their needs, they’re going to be constantly trying to control you, and no one is ever going to win. Whenever we think someone else’s behavior causes our emotions, we have not only set ourselves up to feel negative emotion, but we’ve also set ourselves up to be completely powerless because the only way that we can then feel better is if this other person changes.

Think about the people in your life for whom you have manuals. Do any of these manuals relate to the problem you want to solve? Think about who you want to change and what you want them to do on a regular basis. It’s a little bit different if you have children, because you are responsible for training them. Also, if you’re a boss, there are some things you need to do in terms of your expectations of training and guiding your employees. This is very different from a manual you write for people in your life. Because the manual you write for people says, “If you don’t behave this way, I’m going to feel something.”

I know I mentioned that the parent-child relationship is different, but parents can also fall prey to making manuals for their children. Consider saying this to your child: “If you don’t clean your room, there will be a consequence for you.” That’s very different than “You hurt my feelings because you didn’t make your bed, and that makes mommy feel very upset.” That’s emotional blackmail. It’s important to separate those two things out and to remember that making requests of people and not tying your emotional life to them are expected as a normal part of life.

Clients will come to me saying things like, “You’re telling me I shouldn’t tell my husband that he should take out the garbage?” or “I shouldn’t tell my husband that he should be home on time?” I say, “Absolutely tell him those things. Just don’t let his response dictate your emotional state.” You can make all the requests you want for as many people as you want. But when you tie your emotional happiness to whether they respond or not, that’s when you get yourself into big trouble. When you start banging your head against the wall and trying to manipulate them so they’ll behave in
I gained so much value when I became mindful of my “should-ing” on my parents, husband, etc. Amazing. I’m constantly experiencing peace & calm around them with no crazy urge to advise them to make amends according to my manual.

- ANU

The way you want them to behave so you can feel better, you’ve tied your emotions to their actions. That’s when you’re going to get yourself into a spiral of negativity. That’s the manual.

The Alternative to the Manual

The alternative to having a manual guide your thoughts is to take responsibility for them. If you make a request of someone and they don’t honor it, you take responsibility for how you feel about that. You don’t attach your emotions to their behavior. This doesn’t mean that you stay with people who don’t have values in line with your values or who don’t live in the way that you want to live and are constantly doing things that are against your values. I’m not suggesting that at all. What I am saying is that trying to change them to be more like you want them to be rarely ever works. In fact, it makes you into a crazy person.

I’ve worked with so many clients on this with silly things like turning out the lights or taking out the garbage or being on time when dealing with people who are close to them and who they want to be with. When we release all of those rules and expectations, and we listen to the other person—when we hear what’s going on for them and let go of what we want them to do—our relationships can change with them. We can start understanding them from a different perspective that isn’t clouded by our thinking and what we want to have them do. Before we move on to the next step, I’ll give you an example to illustrate.

The Husband Who Didn’t Care About Dog Poo

One of my clients had a problem with her husband. Neither of them wanted to clean up the dog poo in their yard. She’d say, “I don’t want to clean up the dog poo and neither does he, so why should I have to do it?” This is what I told her: “You don’t have to do it, but the truth is that you want to do it because you don’t want dog poo in the backyard. Expecting your husband to do it when he doesn’t want to do it either and he doesn’t care if there’s dog poo in the backyard has gotten you into this stressful situation.”
My client made this mean that her husband doesn’t care about her, that he doesn’t want to contribute, and that he’s not an equal partner. Instead of just having a problem with dog poo in the backyard, she had this problem with being frustrated and aggravated with her husband. She was making one crappy situation into two. The choice to throw away her manual (for her husband) meant that she either had to do more work or have a messy yard. However, it also eliminated that stress on their relationship. If her husband decided to do her a favor and clean up the dog poo someday, out of love or even just before his buddies come over for a barbecue, it’s a bonus.

Take some time to consider this idea. Are you willing to give up your manuals? Are you willing to let go of your expectations that are based on what you want in your life? Are you willing to instead focus all that time and energy on yourself and creating the best life that you can, for yourself, that isn’t dependent on anyone else’s behavior and in fact is only enhanced by being around people who genuinely are doing things they want to do? I promise you, it’s a game changer.

**STEP FIVE: BE IN CHARGE OF YOU**

The fifth part of the process is about who is in charge of you. Are you being controlled by external circumstances or are you being controlled by your mind? Are you allowing yourself to be in charge of everything you think and everything you feel?

When you have thoughts like, “People hurt my feelings. When they act this way it upsets me. It’s their fault I feel sad. They cause my misery,” you’re not being in charge of you. You’re delegating your emotional responsibility to someone else you have no control over. I’d say probably half of our problems could be solved if we stopped doing this because we cannot change other people’s behavior. When we take back responsibility for our own problems and when we give ourselves the responsibility for being in charge of ourselves and our feelings, then our problems become much less intense because we recognize that we are the ones in control.

**STEP SIX: CHANGE YOUR THINKING ABOUT THE PAST**

The final piece of the process is deciphering the difference between whether you want your future or your past. A lot of our problems come from thinking about our past and trying to renegotiate our past. We want to rewrite it. We want it to be different.

We want to go to the friend that didn’t invite us to the birthday party, and we want them to invite us. We want to argue with them about why they should’ve invited us. But the birthday is over. The party is done, and we’re still trying to make it right. We’re still trying to rewrite it. The only way you can rewrite your past is by rewriting what you’re making it mean. You can’t change the fact
that she didn’t invite you, but you can change the way you’re feeling about her not inviting you by changing the way you’re thinking about it.

You can’t change the way you were raised. You can’t change how your parents brought you up or how they disciplined you or whether they got divorced or not. But you can change the way you’re thinking about it now.

One of the things that I teach my students is that there’s no old thinking. There’s no past thinking—our thoughts are always current thoughts. Your current thought may be about your past, but there’s nothing in your past that’s currently affecting you. The only thing that’s currently affecting you is the thought you’re having right now about your past. You don’t need to change your past to have it affect you differently. You just need to change your thinking about it in this moment. This concept could change your life if you let it.

I want to repeat it one more time. Nothing in your past needs to be changed in order for you to feel better about it, to feel healed about it, or to feel peace about it. The only thing that needs to change is the way you’re thinking about it now.

You don’t need anyone to apologize to you. You don’t need anyone to change what they did because they can’t. It’s already done. All you need to do is decide that you’re going to feel differently about it because you’re going to change the way you think about it. Did you get that? Let that blow your mind. If you believe you had a horrible childhood, you’re going to feel horrible. But you don’t have to believe that. You can believe something different.

I grew up believing I had a horrible childhood, and I changed the way I thought about my childhood. It changed how I view my experience. I changed it to “I had the exact childhood I needed to have to become who I am today. It couldn’t have been any other way for me to become who I am. I was supposed to struggle. I was supposed to be faced with the things that I was faced with. I wasn’t supposed to have an idyllic, perfect childhood.” Now I can be thankful for my childhood instead of constantly arguing with it and being upset about it.

**Focus on the Future and on Solutions**

I want to invite you to look at the thoughts you’re having about your past, and how they relate to your problem, and do what I did. The next thing that I want to invite you to do is to start thinking about your future in a positive, excited way. Solutions can be found in our future. When you think about your future, are you thinking about it in a way that excites you? Are you even thinking about it?
Many of my clients come to me and don’t have their heads turned toward the future. When you start thinking about your future and you start getting excited about it, there’s no limit to what you can create. That can get you excited. That can get you focused in a way that’s very solution oriented.

What is the solution to your problem? When you ask this question, your thinking will change automatically. This will change your feelings and actions. The actions you take from a solution-oriented thought will be much more productive and useful in solving any issue in front of you.

**Try It Out**

Now that you’ve learned the steps, you can start applying this tool today. You can start changing your life in small ways—in the ways that you’re looking at things and the way that you’re dealing with your problems—that can be mind-blowing.

Next time your boss comes in and starts talking to you about problems, you can come right back with solutions. When somebody’s acting in a way that you don’t want them to act, you can know that you get to act the way you want to act. You can think about your “problems” in a way that’s serving you—that’s helping you access the solution instead of just focusing on the negative thoughts.

I know that you’re going to love this as much as I do. I actually created this process and then started using it on myself every day. I’m so excited to have created it because it rocks my world, literally, every single day when I apply it. I remind myself, “Brooke, it’s not the problem, it’s how you’re thinking about it. And that, you can change.” And so can you.
I think everybody should understand the Self Coaching Model because it’s so effective at improving lives. Inevitably, my clients will ask me, “How the heck do you help me feel so much better so quickly? It seems like you’re just laser focused.” It’s all because of the Model. It does take a little time and effort to get the hang of it. Typically, I start with the problem-solving process because it’s a great introduction to the concepts in the Model. I don’t teach the Model to my clients in the first session because it can be overwhelming. If you get overwhelmed as you’re reading this, I have extra materials that can help. Materials like videos, podcasts, and blog posts at my website describe more details about the Model. People have commented with questions about it, and I’ve answered them. And of course, there’s the Self Coaching Scholars program, which will really get you into this tool.

The Model is based on all the studies that I’ve done with all of my teachers in my life. In addition to using it with clients and students, I use it on myself daily. It’s been such a blessing for me and so many of the people that I know and that I’ve worked with. I want to be clear that the basic concept of the Model isn’t something that I invented. It’s a basic truth. What I invented was just a way of looking at it—a way of organizing your brain around it. The concepts behind the tool are universal truths. There are many models that are very similar to this one because it’s based on a universal truth. I think that this model has been useful as a tool for me because it’s visual and it’s something that I can use to write down everything that goes on in my brain.

Take a look at the image of the Model on the next page. Before getting into how to use it, I’ll explain the components of the Model and what they mean. To use the Model, you need to fill in a worksheet that lists each of the five components: circumstances, thoughts, feelings, actions, and results. They can be filled in in any order you choose. The important thing is to put the right words into each section. That’s why I want to take a little time to explain exactly what I mean by each of these five components.
CIRCUMSTANCES

CAN TRIGGER

THOUGHTS

CAUSE

FEELINGS

CAUSE

ACTIONS

CAUSE

RESULTS
CIRCUMSTANCES

We all encounter circumstances, which are the things that happen in the world that we can’t control. One of the things that goes in the circumstance category is our past. Our past has no control over us. Nothing that we’ve done or said, nothing that was done or said to us, has any power over us until we have a thought about it.

Circumstances also include other people’s behavior. Circumstances include what’s going on in the world. Circumstances are the facts of our lives. They are neutral until we have a thought about them. That’s our next category: thoughts.

THOUGHTS

We want to think about thoughts as sentences in our minds. There are so many of them all throughout the day. We have about sixty thousand sentences that go through our minds each day. We want to look at those sentences individually, and we want to evaluate those sentences. If they have any subjective terms, any adjectives, or any descriptive words, we know that they’re thoughts and not facts. Facts go in the circumstance line. Thoughts, which are sentences in our minds, go in the thought line.

Understanding the difference between a circumstance and a thought is one of the most important pieces of the Self Coaching Model. If you learn nothing else but the difference between a thought and a circumstance, you’re well on your way to understanding how your brain works and how it affects you.

Remember that circumstances are neutral until we have a thought about them. Circumstances are something we can all agree on: “That is a white door,” “This computer is on,” “That person said this,” and “This happened in my past” are circumstances. When you start adding, “This horrible thing happened in my past” or “This wonderful thing happened yesterday”—anytime you start adding clarifiers, and anytime you start adding descriptives and opinions and judgments—you’ve moved into the thought line. Only facts belong in that circumstance line.

When you’re going through your life, remember that. Nothing that happens is painful and nothing that happens is wonderful until you have a thought about it. When you choose to have a thought about something, that’s when you’re going to determine how you feel. That’s the next line in the Self Coaching Model: your feelings.
FEELINGS
When I have people fill out the feeling line, I like it to be just a one-word descriptor. So often, we'll ask someone how they're feeling, and they'll give us their thoughts. We want the feeling line to just include feelings like happy, sad, mad, anxious, fabulous, wonderful, loving, or caring. Whatever it is that you're feeling based on what you're thinking, try to keep that to one word. The thought should just be a sentence, the circumstance should just be facts, and the feeling line should just be a one-word feeling that's describing how you're feeling in the moment because of the thought you're having.

ACTIONS
The next line is actions. All of your feelings will drive certain actions. For this component, I want you to think about what you might do, for example, when you’re feeling caring as opposed to what you'd do when you’re feeling angry. The actions are going to be very different based on what you're feeling. The actions will determine your results.

RESULTS
Results are pretty self explanatory. They’re just the consequences, or effects, of your actions. Examples of what could be on your results line include being late for an appointment, gaining five pounds, scoring well on a test, buying your dream home, reconciling with your sister, or getting hired for a job.

HOW THE MODEL WORKS
The best way to learn how to use the Model is to just dive in and try it out. The more you use it, the better you’ll get. Before we begin, here’s a quick summary of what the Model describes. It can be summed up like this:

• Circumstances are facts.
• You have a thought about those facts.
• The thought creates a feeling.
• The feeling creates an action (which could be an inaction or a reaction).
• The action creates a result.

When I first teach this to people, they’re sometimes like, “What the what? What are you even talking about? I don’t get it.” We have to go through a lot of examples and a lot of practice. Understanding the terminology helps when it comes to applying it. So as I describe it, I'm going to use examples to explain what I mean. Let’s do it.
While I can’t say that every day is perfect or that I remember to apply the Model to every moment, I am retraining almost 33 years of negative self talk and making big mindset shifts. Until I started doing the work, my thought was “I want to matter,” and I did everything I possibly could to try to prove that thought to everyone around me. It was exhausting and, quite honestly, incredibly boring. Now my thought (more often than not) is “I matter,” and it’s so freeing. I speak up, I lead, and I am standing taller. I say “no” when I want to and “yes” when I want to. And I’m showing my 15-month-old little girl that she matters too.

- VAL
CTFAR Model Worksheet

CIRCUMSTANCES

THOUGHTS

FEELINGS

ACTIONS

RESULTS
PUT IT ON PAPER

The first thing you should do is think about anything that’s going on with you right now. Just write it down. Use the form that accompanies the chart of the Model, or just use a piece of paper and label it with five lines or sections: C for circumstances, T for thoughts, F for feelings, A for actions, and R for results. The thing you think about can be something wonderful. It can be something horrible. It can be whatever you want. Depending on how you write it down, you’re either going to classify it as a circumstance, thought, feeling, action, or result, and put it on the corresponding line.

Even if you’re making an observation about something, you may still have your own thought mixed in with it. For example, if I look at a vase of flowers, and I say, “There is a vase of flowers sitting in front of me,” that is a fact. It would go on the C line because it’s a circumstance. If I say there is a beautiful vase of flowers sitting in front of me, that is a thought and would go on the T line.

Let’s go through some examples. If I have a client come to me and say, “I can’t stop overeating,” that would be an action. Overeating is a verb. Overeating isn’t subjective. If someone saw the client eat a hundred potato chips or four big bowls of ice cream, they would say the client ate more potato chips or ice cream than her body needed. I would put it on the A (action) line.

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Someone else might come and say, “I hate myself,” which unfortunately happens more often than not. “I hate myself” is a thought. It’s not a circumstance. It’s not factual. Unlike overeating, it’s not a physical thing that happened. It’s a thought. If you say you hate yourself, you’re thinking about yourself. You’re not physically doing anything. Some people would argue, “But it’s really true. It feels true that I hate myself.” Because it’s subjective—because the word “hate” is subjective—what does that statement mean? When you say that to me, I may think, “OK, you’re going to kill yourself,” but someone else may think, “Oh, she’s just kidding.” It’s so subjective that it has to go on the T line.

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<td>I HATE MYSELF.</td>
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If someone says, “I’m so anxious,” that would be a feeling. We put that on the F line. She’s not just thinking she’s anxious. She’s feeling it. Maybe her heart’s racing, or she has butterflies in her stomach, or her skin feels like it’s crawling. Remember the alien? You can describe a feeling to the alien.

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One of the questions I received during a webinar, which highlights how it can be confusing sometimes to choose the correct category, was, “What if the circumstance is sad?” But the circumstance is never sad. Circumstances are always neutral. There’s no judgment when it comes to circumstances. The example that the asker of the question used was when someone dies. But someone dying isn’t sad until you have a thought about it, right? The act of the person dying isn’t sad. It’s the thought we have about it. I get a lot of arguments about this from people, and I want to clear it up: When someone dies, if we don’t know about that person dying, we don’t feel sad. How is that possible? The reason why we don’t feel sad is because we don’t have it in our conscious awareness. We haven’t had a thought about it yet. I’m of course not suggesting that you wouldn’t want to feel sad. And then there’s the case of someone dying who was suffering. You’re going to have a very different thought than if you know of a young person getting in an accident. Then there are people who die, who may have caused a lot of harm, and some people are happy that they’re dead. Everybody has different feelings about it based on what they think about it. It’s important to know the difference between a circumstance and a thought. The circumstance is that somebody died. That is neutral. It’s not good. It’s not bad. It’s not sad. It’s not happy. Your thought about it determines how you feel about it.

Make sure that when you’re doing these models that the C line has nothing but facts in it. You take full responsibility that the T, the thought that you’re thinking, is optional. If you have a thought that is “I’m not capable,” you may think that you’re just stating a fact. And it could be, if, for example, the circumstance is that you can’t do a triple backflip. But you need to be that specific on the C line. “I’m not capable” is subjective. “I’m not capable of doing a triple backflip” is factual and can go on the C line.

The A line is your action, your reaction, or your inaction. For example, overeating, undereating, eating only when you’re hungry, eating past fullness, and eating all day are actions. Being kind to someone, talking to someone, or not talking to someone are all actions that would go on your A line.
Not doing anything, or sitting in front of the TV, are inactions. Those may be on your A line. What you do in your life is going to determine your results. This model is so elegant and so helpful by showing us the cost of everything in our life. When we talk about causal coaching, we talk about determining the cause of our results in our life, the cause of our actions in our life, and the cause of how we feel in our life. It’s important to understand that we feel the way we feel because of our thinking.

We act the way we act because of our thinking. The results we get are because of our thinking, not because of our circumstances. Even though I’ve explained it and showed it to you intellectually, it might not get through to you until you actually put it into the Model for yourself. Even when I put the Model out in front of my self coaching students on a video, it’s very surprising to them to see the difference between a thought and a circumstance after they actually work through the Model. Because even though they think they understand it all intellectually, it’s a very different thing when they write it all out for themselves.

The reason why the Model is so awesome for coaches is that any time a client comes to us and has any problem, we can categorize it into the Model. There’s nothing that can’t be categorized into the Model, and so there’s nothing that becomes too overwhelming to talk about due to us not knowing what to do with it. It’s either a circumstance (something that happened in the past, something that happened earlier in the day, etc.); a thought (which is a sentence—a thought the person’s having about a circumstance); a feeling; an action (or an inaction or a reaction); or a result they’re getting. Now occasionally something can belong on either the C or R line, depending on the situation, such as if a client comes to me and says, “I weigh 350 pounds.” That would be a result (from the action of overeating), but we could also put that on the C line as a fact (which triggers a thought), depending on the situation.

Once you’ve categorized whatever it is you’re dealing with, then you can look at the Model and see the cause of it. The cause of all our feelings, actions, and results is always going to be a thought. That’s why I’m so insistent that you always pay attention to what’s going on in your brain. If your brain and your thoughts are responsible for everything that you feel and everything that you do, and all the results you get, it’s probably a crucial thing to keep an eye on your brain. Most of us don’t keep an eye on our brains because it takes effort. It takes effort to use your brain to watch your brain. Most of us would rather go into default mode than pay attention to what we’re thinking.

That comes at a huge cost. Just because you’re not paying attention doesn’t mean that you aren’t thinking. You’re probably thinking on autopilot. If you’re thinking positive, wonderful thoughts that give you great feelings and actions and results, then that’s a great thing. For many of us, we’re running old patterns that are creating results that we don’t want. That’s when we start having to pay attention to our brains.
Just wanted to share that I used the Model in our Sunday School class today! And they got it—third through fifth graders—on the topic of turning the other cheek. I’ve also demoed it with my small business entrepreneurs meet-up group and on a women’s retreat at the beach. Thanks so much for teaching this to us.

- JANE

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Once you’ve categorized whatever it is you’re dealing with, then you fill in the rest of the Model. If you presented with, let’s say, a circumstance such as “My boss laid me off from my job,” we can all agree that that’s what happened. That can be proven in a court of law. We all know what that means. You’re laid off.

C  MY BOSS LAID ME OFF.

T

F

A

R

What is your thought about it? You think the reason you’re upset is because your boss laid you off, but in reality, you’re upset because of the thought you’re having about it. There are so many options. You could think, “Wow, that’s awesome. Can’t wait to get a new job,” “Wow, that’s awesome. I hated this job anyway,” “Oh, that’s just the kick in the pants I needed to start my own business,” or you could think, “My life is over. This is devastating. My family’s not going to be able to eat.” Look at all the different thoughts you could choose to think in that moment. Most of us don’t take the time to think about what we want to think about. We just let our brain pick something by default.

C  MY BOSS LAID ME OFF.

T  MY LIFE IS OVER.

F

A

R

Whatever we choose to think in that moment, whether it’s chosen consciously or unconsciously, will create how we feel in that moment. How we feel in that moment will determine what we do.
If you think a thought like, “This is great. I’m so excited. I can finally start my own business,” you’re going to feel excited. You’re probably going to take action to get that business going. If you have a thought like, “This is the end of my life. My family’s never going to be able to eat again,” you’re probably going to feel depressed. The action you’re going to take based on that thought is probably inaction—probably nothing—which will of course “prove” to yourself that you can’t get a job, that you can’t feed your family, and that your life is over. The result you create is always going to prove that original thought.

C MY BOSS LAID ME OFF.

T MY LIFE IS OVER.

F DEPRESSED.

A NOTHING.

R NO JOB. LIFE OVER.

Note that if you present with a fact, then you want to look at what thoughts you’re having about that fact, what feelings that thought is creating, and what you’re doing because of those feelings. Be careful here when you’re asking yourself the question, “What do I do when I feel disappointed?” or “What do I do when I feel depressed?” Make sure that you’re capturing the action that’s driven by that exact emotion.

MOVING TOWARD CHANGE

As you’re filling in the blanks and moving toward finishing the Model, think of the changes you can make and the habits or patterns that you make. An example I like to use is brushing teeth. Maybe the thought is, “I don’t want my breath to stink” or “I don’t like the feel of my teeth when they’re not brushed” or “I don’t want to get cavities.” Whatever the thought is, you can see how that creates a feeling, and then the action is brushing your teeth. We don’t just brush our teeth without a thought first. When you do something habitually, it may not be something that you’re conscious of at first, but you can go back and find it.

The same is true for anything you do in your life that you don’t want to be doing. For example, watching TV instead of working out. Or going out to eat every night, spending too much money and eating too much food. What is the thought that drives that? You can start managing your mind by understanding that everything you’re doing starts with a thought. Then you can get to the cause of everything. That makes behavioral change so much easier. When we try to change our behavior without changing our thoughts first, we’re working against ourselves.
You want to change your thoughts at the cognitive level first. Then it’s so much easier to change at the behavioral level. The most important thing is how we feel. Everything we do in our life, everything we wanted to do in our life, and everything we don’t do is because of how we think we will feel. We go to work because we think it will make us feel better because we’ll have more money. We are kind to people. We treat people with respect. We take care of our kids. Everything we do in our lives is because of how we think it will make us feel.

**CHOOSE YOUR THOUGHTS CAREFULLY**

A lot of times a thought can sound pretty. It can sound like a good thought. It can sound like something that would serve you in your life. But when you actually ask yourself, “How does that thought feel?” it doesn’t feel good at all. When you have a thought like, “I don’t really care that they didn’t include me,” make sure you check how that feels when you think it, when you say it, and when you write it down. How does it feel?

Because if it’s a thought that’s not true, it will feel terrible. If you’re pretending with yourself, it won’t feel good and that’s how you’ll know that the thought is a lie. A lot of times we have thoughts like, “I want to help her.” That sounds good, right? I want to help her sounds like a good thought... but it doesn’t feel good. The “I want to help her” doesn’t feel good in your body when you think it. It feels like maybe resentment or frustration. Identify the feeling. The other way that I determine if a thought will serve my clients is that I have them look at their actions and I tell them, “Hey, make sure you like the reason you’re doing that.”

One of my clients was talking about how she always just likes to order what everybody else orders when they go to a restaurant because she feels more comfortable doing this than choosing for herself. She doesn’t want people to judge her based on what she would choose. I told her that’s fine if she liked her reason. In situations like this, if the answer is, “Yes. I like my reason,” then you move forward. If it’s “No,” then you don’t move forward. Just be clear. If you want to know what you’re thinking—if you want to know what’s going on in your mind—the best way to do that is to look at your life. Your life is filled with results you’ve created. Look at your relationships. Look at the money in your bank account. Look at the car you’re driving. Look at the people you’re spending time with. Look at the number of friends you have. Look at the number of friends you don’t have. Look at your education. Look at the job you’re doing. Those are all results in your life, and you get to own that you created every single one of those results with your thoughts, which created your feelings, which inspired your actions.
FINISH THE MODEL

Sometimes people try to switch models. They’ll say, “Oh, I feel depressed, so I want to go out and cheer myself up.” That’s a switch to a different model. You need to find out what you do when you’re feeling depressed, what action you take or what action you don’t take when you’re feeling depressed. If you want to change the feeling of depression, then you’ll think a different thought, experience a different feeling, and take a different action. That will give you a different model. Don’t mix up your models.

BE CURIOUS AND COMPASSIONATE WITH YOURSELF

When you spend some time understanding your mind—when you start looking at your thinking and you start seeing the feelings that you’re creating for yourself and the actions that you’re taking because of those feelings—it can be overwhelming and mind-blowing. You can say, “Wow, I can see that the thoughts I’m choosing to think cause me to feel the way I do, which causes me to act the way I do.” If you have a lot of negative thinking, you’re probably going to have a lot of little negative results in your life.

You might decide when you start using this model and understanding yourself, that it’s overwhelming to look at that and it’s frustrating to know that you have so many negative thoughts. What I want to suggest to you is to just be curious and compassionate. When you start understanding your mind, you may not like what’s going on in there, but that’s a beautiful thing. It means there’s so much potential for you to change your feelings, change what you’re doing in your life, and change your results. It can actually be exciting.

I want to offer that, as you go through this process of unlayering your mind, you plan on finding things that you don’t like, that there are going to be things in your brain that you’re not amused by. That’s OK, and that’s not a bad thing. That’s actually a good thing because it gives you an opportunity to make some amazing changes.

When I introduce this model to people, and they start looking at their thinking and seeing all of the negative results they’re creating in their lives, if they immediately say, “OK. That’s fine. How do I change it? I want to change it immediately,” I often ask them to slow down. Because until you see the patterns, understand what you’re doing and why you’re doing it, and understand the thoughts you’re choosing in a deep, compassionate, and observing way, it doesn’t usually help to just try and thought-swap or just try and come up with a new thought and be happy all of a sudden.
What a wonderful freedom we have once the realization comes that we have control over our thoughts. It takes recognition that there are negative emotions we must acknowledge before we can do something about adjusting our compass.

- JACK

WATCH FOR PATTERNS

Instead of opting for immediate change, it’s much more useful to observe the patterns, to see the effects of your thinking, and to understand that the things happening in your life aren’t responsible for the results you get. Rather, it’s your thinking about the things that are happening in your life that is causing you to have negative feelings, actions, and results. That can be alarming, but it can also be liberating to understand how much power you have in your life and that all these things you thought were just happening to you are not happening to you. You have control by what you decide to think about those things that are happening to you.

Once you understand those patterns and you’ve taken some time to be in that space of understanding, then when you move on to try to create new models and to adopt some new thinking, you’re going to be in a much better place because you’ll understand the power of your thinking.

Let’s consider this for just a little bit. When you notice that you have a lot of negative thinking and you decide, “Ok, I want to start thinking some more positive thoughts. I want to start cultivating new thought processes in my brain, and I know that that’s going to take some effort,” one of the things I recommend is that you ease yourself into a new thought. Instead of going from “I’m so fat and ugly” to “I’m beautiful and lovely and thin,” you go from “Oh my God, my body’s so fat and ugly” to “I have a body. My body is capable. My body is healthy. My body is functioning.”

As we covered in Chapter 6, “Thought Management,” you go to a more neutral thought, and you practice that new thought. It has to be believable. It has to be something that you genuinely believe and that feels slightly better than the previous thought. As you practice that new thought, it can become more dominant than the previous thought. That’s how you move away from a negative thought to a less negative thought, and then maybe to a neutral thought.
Then and only then, when you’ve practiced it and seen the power, should you move to a positive thought. Affirmations are powerful—but only if you believe them. So many of us try to do affirmations. We try to think new thoughts, but because we don’t believe them, our brain just says, “Yeah, no.” We’re saying these positive thoughts to ourselves, and we’re not believing them, so they’re not becoming new patterns of thought in our brains. There has to be a level of belief there. I’ve found, for myself and for my clients, that it’s much more powerful to shift the thought just slightly to a more neutral thought first, and then practice that one, and then ultimately move on to a more positive thought.

If you have the thought, “My body’s so fat and ugly,” you may feel discouraged, and you may feel shame. The action may be, ironically, to overeat. Then the result will be that you gain weight, which of course “proves” the idea that your body is overweight, fat, and ugly. When you change that thought to “I have a body,” “I have a healthy body,” or “I have a capable body,” that’s going to change the feeling slightly. It may change it to acceptance. It may change it to just neutral. It may change it to ecstatic—who knows? You have to check in. How does that thought make you feel? When the feeling changes slightly, then the action is going to change. It’s going to be a different feeling, which is going to cause a different action. You may still overeat, but it just may be less. You may overeat with more awareness or you may stop overeating altogether, which then produces a different result and gives you different evidence for the original thinking that you had.

Your brain wants to prove itself true. That’s what the Model demonstrates. The brain is looking for evidence for whatever it’s thinking. The brain likes to be efficient, and it likes to be right. When you start trying to change your thinking, you’re going to have this cognitive dissonance. You’re going to have this discomfort of adjusting from one thought to another. Most people don’t like the feeling of that discomfort, and so they give up on trying to adopt new beliefs.

I want to offer to you that if you’re willing to go through the discomfort and you’re willing to make the effort, once you’ve thought the new thought and believed the new thought enough times, then it becomes the easier thought to think. That’s where you want to get with yourself. You want to get to the place where thinking positive, nurturing, nourishing thoughts comes naturally. You can’t get to the point where that habit of thinking comes naturally until you practice it over and over and over again.

It’s worth the effort, and I promise you it’s worth the initial discomfort of being in a space where you’ve proven yourself wrong. If you’re willing to be wrong, then you’re going to be willing to adopt new thoughts. You’re going to be willing to adopt new ways of thinking about yourself, which will ultimately change your entire life because it will change the way you feel, it will change the way you act, and it will change the results you get.
If this is your first introduction to the Model and this is the first time you’ve ever even heard about it, you may be thinking, “What are you talking about?” I want you to be willing to stay with it long enough. If you’re willing to practice and learn the Model, and you’re willing to see it as something that you could use in your life to change how you think, I promise you it can change your life in all the ways you want. You truly have all the power to honor all of your true desires. Nothing is too good to be true.
I hope you realized that what you’ve just learned means nothing if you don’t apply it. All this information about overcoming obstacles, about thought management, and about self coaching tools must be put to work. If it is, it will serve your goals for a better life—even if yours is already pretty good. Remember that you are in charge of your mind. You may not get to choose the circumstances you face, but you get to choose your thoughts, your feelings, and your actions.

If you’d like to learn more about life coaching, please join Self Coaching Scholars. You can learn more at www.thelifecoachschool.com/join. I’m incredibly proud of what we do in Scholars and would be honored to coach you.
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